

ALL THE YEAR ROUND.

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VERY HARD CASH.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "IT IS NEVER TOO LATE TO MEND."

CHAPTER III.

WINNING boat-races was all very fine; but a hundred such victories could not compensate Mr. Kennet's female hearers for one such defeat as he had announced, a defeat that, to their minds, carried disgrace. Their Edward plucked! At first they were benumbed, and sat chilled, with red cheeks, bewildered between present triumph and mortification at hand. Then the colour ebbed out of their faces, and they encouraged each other feebly in whispers, "might it not be a mistake?"

But unconscious Kennet robbed them of this timid hope. He was now in his element, knew all about it, rushed into details, and sawed away all doubt from their minds.

The sum was this. Dodd's general performance was mediocre, but passable; he was plucked for his Logic. Hardie said he was very sorry for it. "What does it matter," answered Kennet; "he is a boating man."

"Well, and I am a boating man. Why you told me yourself, the other day, poor Dodd was anxious about it on account of his friends. And, by-the-by, that reminds me they say he has got two pretty sisters here."

Says Kennet, briskly, "I'll go and tell him; I know him just to speak to."

"What, doesn't he know?"

"How can he know?" said Kennet, jealously; the testamurs were only just out as I came away." And with this he started on his congenial errand.

Hardie took two or three of his long strides, and fairly collared him. "You will do nothing of the kind."

"What, not tell a man when he's ploughed? That is a good joke."

"No. There's time enough. Tell him after chapel, to-morrow, or in chapel if you must: but why poison his triumphal cup? And his sisters, too, why spoil their pleasure? Hang it all, not a word about 'ploughing' to any living soul to-day."

To his surprise, Kennet's face expressed no sympathy, nor even bare assent. At this Hardie lost patience, and burst out impetuously, "Take

care how you refuse me; take care how you thwart me in this. He is the best-natured fellow in college. It doesn't matter to you, and it does to him; and if you *do*, then take my name off the list of your acquaintance, for I'll never speak a word to you again in this world; no, not on my death-bed, by Heaven."

The threat was extravagant; but Youth's glowing cheek, and eye, and imperious lip, and simple generosity, made it almost beautiful.

Kennet whined, "Oh, if you talk like that, there is an end to fair argument."

"End it then, and promise me: upon your honour!"

"Why not? What bosh! There I promise. Now, how do you construe *κυμνοπριστης*?"

The incongruous dog ("I thank thee, Taff, for teaching me that word") put this query with the severity of an inquisitor bringing back a garrulous prisoner to the point.

Hardie replied gaily, "Any way you like, now you are a good fellow again."

"Come, that is evasive. My tutor says it cannot be rendered by any one English word; no more can *γαστριμαργος*."

"Why, what on earth can he know about English?—*γαστριμαργος* is a Cormorant: *κυμνοπριστης* is a Skindint; and your tutor is a Duffer. Hush! Keep dark now! here he comes." And he went hastily to meet Edward Dodd: and by that means intercepted him on his way to the carriage. "Give me your hand, Dodd," he cried; "you have saved the university. You must be stroke of the eight-oar after me. Let me see more of you than I have, old fellow."

"With all my heart," replied Edward, calmly, but taking the offered hand cordially; though he rather wanted to get away to his mother and sister.

"We will pull together, and read together into the bargain," continued Hardie.

"Read together? You and I? What do you mean?"

"Well, you see I am pretty well up in the higher books; what I have got to rub up is my Divinity and my Logic; especially my Logic. Will you grind Logic with me? Say 'Yes,' for I know you will keep your word."

"It is too good an offer to refuse, Hardie; but now I look at you, you are excited; won-

derfully excited; with the race, eh? Now, just—you—wait—quietly—till next week, and then, if you are so soft as to ask me in cool blood——”

“Wait a week?” cried the impetuous youth. “No, not a minute. It is settled. There, we cram Logic together next term.”

And he shook Edward's hand again with glistening eyes and an emotion that was quite unintelligible to Edward; but not to the quick, sensitive, spirits, who sat but fifteen yards off.

“You really must excuse me just now,” said Edward, and ran to the carriage, and put out both hands to the fair occupants. They kissed him eagerly, with little tender sighs; and it cost them no slight effort not to cry publicly over “the beloved,” “the victorious,” “the ploughed.”

Young Hardie stood petrified.

“What? These ladies Dodd's sisters! Why, one of them had called the other mamma. Good Heavens, all his talk in their hearing had been of Dodd; and Kennet and he between them had let out the very thing he wanted to conceal, especially from Dodd's relations. He gazed at them, and turned hot to the very forehead.

Then, not knowing what to do or say, and being after all but a clever boy, not a cool “never unready” man of the world, he slipped away, blushing. Kennet followed, goggling.

Left to herself, Mrs. Dodd would have broken the bad news to Edward at once, and taken the line of consoling him under her own vexation: it would not have been the first time she had played that card. But young Mr. Hardie had said it would be unkind to poison Edward's day, and it is sweet woman's nature to follow suit; so she and Julia put bright faces on, and Edward passed a right jocund afternoon with them; he was not allowed to surprise one of the looks they interchanged to relieve their secret mortification.

But, after dinner, as the time drew near for him to go back to Oxford, Mrs. Dodd became silent, and a little distraite; and at last drew her chair away to a small table, and wrote a letter.

In directing it she turned it purposely, so that Julia could catch the address: “*Edward Dodd, Esq., Exeter College, Oxford.*”

Julia was naturally startled at first, and her eye roved almost comically to and fro the letter and its Destination, seated calm and unconscious of woman's beneficent wiles. But, her heart soon divined the mystery; it was to reach him the first thing in the morning, and spare him the pain of writing the news to them; and, doubtless, so worded as not to leave him a day in doubt of their forgiveness and sympathy.

Julia took the missive unobserved by the Destination, and glided out of the room to get it quietly posted.

The servant-girl was waiting on the second-floor lodgers, and told her so, with a significant addition, viz. that the post was in this street, and only a few doors off.

Julia was a little surprised at her coolness, but took the hint with perfect good temper, and just put on her shawl and bonnet, and went with it herself.

The post-office was not quite so near as represented; but she was soon there, for she was eager till she had posted it; but she came back slowly and thoughtfully: here in the street, lighted only by the moon, and an occasional gaslight, there was no need for self-restraint, and soon her mortification betrayed itself in her speaking countenance. And to think that her mother, on whom she doted, should have to write to her son, there present, and post the letter! This made her eyes fill, and before she reached the door of the lodging, they were brimming over.

As she put her foot on the step, a timid voice addressed her, in a low tone of supplication. “May I venture to speak one word to you, Miss Dodd?—one single word?”

She looked up surprised; and it was young Mr. Hardie.

His tall figure was bending towards her submissively, and his face, as well as his utterance, betrayed considerable agitation.

And what led to so unusual a rencontre between a young gentleman and lady who had never been introduced?

“The Tender Passion,” says a reader of many novels.

Why, yes; the tenderest in all our nature: Wounded vanity.

Naturally proud and sensitive, and inflated by success and flattery, Alfred Hardie had been torturing himself ever since he fled Edward's female relations. He was mortified to the core. He confounded “the fools” (his favourite synonym for his acquaintance) for going and calling Dodd's mother an elder sister, and so not giving him a chance to divine her. And then that he, who prided himself on his discrimination, should take them for ladies of rank, or, at all events, of the highest fashion; and, climax of humiliation, that so great a man as he should go and seem to court them by praising Dodd of Exeter, by enlarging upon Dodd of Exeter, by offering to grind Logic with Dodd of Exeter. Who would believe that this was a coincidence, a mere coincidence? They could not be expected to believe it; female vanity would not let them. He tingled, and was not far from hating the whole family: so bitter a thing is that which I have ventured to dub “the Tenderest Passion.”

He itched to ease his irritation by explaining to Edward. Dodd was a frank, good-hearted fellow; he would listen to facts, and convince the ladies in turn. Hardie learned where Dodd's party lodged, and waited about the door to catch

him alone ; Dodd must be in college by twelve, and would leave Henley before ten. He waited till he was tired of waiting. But at last the door opened ; he stepped forward, and out tripped Miss Dodd. "Confound it!" muttered Hardie, and drew back. However, he stood and admired her graceful figure and action, her lady-like speed without bustling. Had she come back at the same pace, he would never have ventured to stop her : on such a thread do things hang : but she returned very slowly, hanging her head ; her look at him and his headache recurred to him, a look brimful of goodness. She would do as well as Edward, better perhaps. He yielded to impulse, and addressed her, but with all the trepidation of a youth defying the giant Etiquette for the first time in his life.

Julia was a little surprised and fluttered, but did not betray it ; she had been taught self-command by example, if not by precept.

"Certainly, Mr. Hardie," said she, with a modest composure a young coquette might have envied under the circumstances.

Hardie had now only to explain himself ; but instead of that, he stood looking at her with silent concern ; the fair face she raised to him was wet with tears ; so were her eyes, and even the glorious eyelashes were fringed with that tender spray ; and it glistened in the moonlight.

This sad and pretty sight drove the vain but generous youth's calamity clean out of his head. "Why, you are crying! Miss Dodd, what is the matter? I hope nothing has happened."

Julia turned her head away a little fretfully, with a "No, no!" But soon her natural candour and simplicity prevailed ; a simplicity not without dignity ; she turned round to him and looked him in the face, "Why should I deny it to you, sir, who have been good enough to sympathise with us? We *are* mortified, sadly mortified, at dear Edward's disgrace ; and it has cost us a struggle not to disobey you, and poison his triumphal cup with sad looks. And mamma had to write to him, and console him against to-morrow : but I hope he will not feel it so severely as she does : and I have just posted it myself, and when I thought of our dear mamma being driven to such expedients, I—Oh!" And the pure young heart, having opened itself by words, must flow a little more.

"Oh, pray don't cry," said young Hardie, tenderly ; "don't take such a trifle to heart so ; you crying makes me feel guilty for letting it happen. It shall never occur again. If I had only known, it should never have happened at all."

"Once is enough," sighed Julia.

"Indeed you take it too much to heart ; it is only out of Oxford a plough is thought much of ; especially a single one ; that is so very common. You see, Miss Dodd, an university examination consists of several items : neglect but one, and Crichton himself would be ploughed ; because brilliancy in your other papers is not allowed to count ; that is how the most distinguished man of

our day got ploughed for Smalls ; I had a narrow escape, I know, for one. But, Miss Dodd, if you knew how far your brother's performance on the river outweighs a mere slip in the schools, in all university men's eyes, the dons' and all, you would not make this bright day end sadly to Oxford by crying. Why, I could find you a thousand men who would be ploughed to-morrow with glory and delight, to win one such race as your brother has won two."

Julia sighed again. But it sounded now half like a sigh of relief ; the final sigh, with which the fair consent to be consoled.

And, indeed, this improvement in the music did not escape Hardie ; he felt he was on the right tack : he enumerated fluently, and by name, many good men, besides Dean Swift, who had been ploughed, yet had cultivated the field of letters in their turn ; and, in short, he was so earnest and plausible, that something like a smile hovered about his hearer's lips, and she glanced askant at him with furtive gratitude from under her silky lashes. But soon it recurred to her that this was rather a long interview to accord to "a stranger," and under the moon ; so she said a little stiffly, "And was this what you were good enough to wish to say to me, Mr. Hardie?"

"No, Miss Dodd, to be frank, it was not. My motive in addressing you, without the right to take such a freedom, was egotistical. I came here to clear myself ; I—I was afraid you must think me a humbug, you know."

"I do not understand you, indeed."

"Well, I feared you and Mrs. Dodd might think I praised Dodd so, and did what little I did for him, knowing who you were, and wishing to curry favour with you by all that ; and that is so underhand and paltry a way of going to work, I should despise myself."

"Oh, Mr. Hardie," said the young lady, smiling, "how foolish : why, of course we knew you had no idea."

"Indeed I had not ; but how could you know it?"

"Why, we saw it. Do you think we have no eyes? ah, and much keener ones than gentlemen have. It is mamma and I who are to blame, if anybody ; we ought to have declared ourselves : it would have been more generous, more manly. But we can not all be gentlemen, you know. It was so sweet to hear Edward praised by one who did not know us ; it was like stolen fruit ; and by one whom others praise : so if you can forgive us our slyness, there is an end of the matter."

"Forgive you? you have taken a thorn out of my soul."

"Then I am so glad you summoned courage to speak to me without ceremony. Mamma would have done better though ; but after all, do not I know her? My mamma is all goodness and intelligence ; and be assured, sir, she does you justice ; and is quite sensible of your *disinterested* kindness to dear Edward." With this she was about to retire.

"Ah! But you, Miss Dodd? with whom I have taken this unwarrantable liberty?" said Hardie, imploringly.

"Me, Mr. Hardie? you do me the honour to require my opinion of your performances; including of course this self-introduction?"

Hardie hung his head; there was a touch of satire in the lady's voice, he thought.

Her soft eyes rested demurely on him a moment; she saw he was a little abashed.

"My opinion of it all is that you have been very kind to us; in being most kind to our poor Edward. I never saw, nor read of anything more generous, more manly. And then so thoughtful, so considerate, so delicate! so instead of criticising you, as you seem to expect, his sister only blesses you, and thanks you from the very bottom of her heart."

She had begun with a polite composure, borrowed from mamma; but, once launched, her ardent nature got the better: her colour rose and rose, and her voice sank and sank, and the last words came almost in a whisper, and such a lovely whisper; a gurgle from the heart: and, as she concluded, her delicate hand came sweeping out with a heaven-taught gesture of large and sovereign cordiality, that made even the honest words and the divine tones more eloquent. It was too much: the young man, ardent as herself, and not, in reality, half so timorous, caught fire; and seeing a white, eloquent hand rather near him, caught it, and pressed his warm lips on it in mute adoration and gratitude.

At this she was scared and offended. "Oh! keep that for the Queen!" cried she, turning scarlet, and tossing her fair head into the air, like a startled stag, and she drew her hand away quickly and decidedly, though not roughly. He stammered a lowly apology; in the very middle of it she said, softly, "Good-by, Mr. Hardie," and swept, with a gracious little curtsy, through the doorway, leaving him spell-bound.

And so the virginal instinct of self-defence carried her off swiftly and cleverly. But none too soon; for, on entering the house, that external composure, her two mothers, Mesdames Dodd and Nature, had taught her, fell from her like a veil, and she fluttered up the stairs to her own room, with hot cheeks, and panted there like some wild thing that has been grasped at and grazed. She felt young Hardie's lips upon the palm of her hand plainly; they seemed to linger there still; it was like light but live velvet. This, and the ardent look he had poured into her eyes, set the young creature quivering. Nobody had looked at her so before, and no young gentleman had imprinted living velvet on her hand. She was alarmed, ashamed, and uneasy. What right had he to look at her like that? What shadow of a right to go and kiss her hand? He could not pretend to think she had put it out to be kissed; ladies put forth the back of the hand for that, not the palm. The truth was he

was an impudent fellow, and she hated him now, and herself too, for being so simple as to let him talk to her; mamma would not have been so imprudent when she was a girl.

She would not go down, for she felt there must be something of this kind legibly branded on her face: "O! O! just look at this young lady! She has been letting a young gentleman kiss the palm of her hand; and the feel has not gone off yet: you may see that by her cheeks."

But, then, poor Edward! she must go down.

So she put a wet towel to her tell-tale cheeks, and dried them by artistic dabs, avoiding friction, and came down stairs like a mouse, and turned the door-handle noiselessly, and glided into the sitting-room, looking so transparent, conscious, and all on fire with beauty and animation, that even Edward was startled, and, in a whisper, bade his mother observe what a pretty girl she was; "beats all the county girls in a canter."

Mrs. Dodd did look; and, consequently, as soon as ever Edward was gone to Oxford, she said to Julia, "You are feverish, love; you have been excited with all this. You had better go to bed."

Julia complied willingly, for she felt a strange, and, to her, novel inclination; she wanted to be alone and think. She retired to her own room, and went the whole day over again; and was happy and sorry, exalted and uneasy, by turns; and ended by excusing Mr. Hardie's escapade, and throwing the blame on herself. She ought to have been more distant; gentlemen were not expected, nor indeed much wanted, to be modest. A little assurance did not misbecome them. "Really I think it sets them off," said she to herself.

Grand total: "What *must* he think of me?"

Time gallops in reverie: the town clock struck twelve, and with its iron tongue remorse entered her youthful conscience. Was this obeying mamma? Mamma had said, Go to bed: not, "Go up-stairs and meditate: upon young gentlemen." She gave an expressive shake of her fair shoulders, like a swan flapping the water off its downy wings, and so dismissed the subject from her mind.

Then she said her prayers.

Then she rose from her knees, and cajoled the imaginary cat out from its theoretical hiding-place. "Puss! puss! pretty puss!"

Thieves and ghosts she did not believe in, yet credited cats under beds, and thought them neither "harmless" nor "necessary" there.

After tenderly evoking the detested and chimerical quadruped, she proceeded none the less to careful research, especially of cupboards. The door of one resisted, and then yielded with a crack, and blew out the candle. "There now," said she.

It was her only light, except her beauty. They allotted each Hebe but one candle, in that ancient burgh.

"Well," she thought, "there is moonlight enough to undress by."

She went to draw back one of the curtains. But in the act she started back with a little scream. There was a tall figure over the way watching the house.

The moon shone from her side of the street full on him, and in that instant her quick eye recognised Mr. Hardie.

"Well!" said she aloud, and with an indescribable inflexion; and hid herself swiftly in impenetrable gloom.

But, after a while, Eve's daughter must have a peep. She stole with infinite caution to one side of the curtain, and made an aperture just big enough for one bright eye. Yes, there he was, motionless. "I'll tell mamma," said she to him, malignantly, as if the sound could reach him.

Unconscious of the direful threat, he did not budge.

She was unaffectedly puzzled at this phenomenon; and, not being the least vain, fell to wondering whether he played the nightly sentinel opposite every lady's window, who exchanged civilities with him. "Because, if he does, he is a fool," said she, promptly. But on reflection, she felt sure he did nothing of the kind, habitually, for he had too high an opinion of himself; she had noted that trait in him at a very early stage. She satisfied herself, by cautious examination, that he did not know her room. He was making a temple of the whole lodging. "How ridiculous of him!" Yet he appeared to be happy over it; there was an exalted look in his moonlit face; she seemed now first to see his soul there. She studied his countenance like an inscription, and deciphered each rapt expression that crossed it; and stored them in her memory.

Twice she left her ambuscade, to go to bed: and twice Curiosity, or Something, drew her back. At last having looked, peered, and peeped till her feet were cold, and her face the reverse, she informed herself that the foolish Thing had tired her out.

"Good night, Mr. Policeman," said she, pretending to bawl to him. "And, O, do rain! As hard as ever you can." With this benevolent aspiration, a little too violent to be sincere, she laid her cheek on her pillow doughtily.

But her sentinel, when out of sight, had more power to disturb her. She lay and wondered whether he was still there, and what it all meant, and what ever mamma would say; and which of the two, she or he, was the head culprit in this strange performance, to which Earth, she conceived, had seen no parallel; and, above all, what he would do next. Her pulse galloped, and her sleep was broken; and she came down in the morning a little pale. Mrs. Dodd saw it at once, with the quick maternal eye; and moralised: "It is curious; youth is so fond of pleasure; yet pleasure seldom agrees with youth; this little excitement has done your mother good, who is no longer young; but it has been too much

for you. I shall be glad to have you back to our quiet home."

Ah! Will that home be as tranquil now?

PARIS UNDER A FRENCH MICROSCOPE.

AFTER M. PELLETAN'S vigorous sketches of social and domestic Paris,* it is only natural that the same gentleman should look a little further, into their moral consequences. Something serious *must* come of a rule of etiquette—established nobody knows how—which compels a woman of distinction to change her costume four times a day, and forbids her to present the same dress twice at an evening party. Full details of the picture, and what happens afterwards, are boldly traced by the Provincial in Paris. The rebuke is administered by a native teacher, who shows his own compatriots what a life they are leading. We enter his company once again, and reproduce, in English, some more of what he tells us.

A little while ago, Parisians acknowledged the superiority of intellect; at present, all they seem to care for is, to enjoy life, and to glitter in the sunshine. A man of the world may have been to school in his childhood; because, at that age, he makes too much noise to be permitted to dwell under the paternal roof. At the university, he may have picked up a little education—a little Latin, Greek, and French; a little history and geography, hastily crammed, to pass his bachelor's examination. The baccalaureat once obtained, he would consider it unworthy of himself to continue his intellectual development. A little old man of twenty, very dry, very starched, very wrinkled in mind, very sceptical of every belief of the age, closely buttoned against all aspiration, he holds that the son of a rich father has fulfilled his obligations to God and man when he has chosen a good tailor, rides a good horse, dines at the Café Anglais, and sups—Heaven knows where, in the Bréda quarter.

He would accept, perhaps, a diplomatic situation, because it allows him to travel at the government expense, and, after a certain time, procures him the right to carry all the colours of the rainbow at his button-hole. He even goes so far as to solicit the first vacant place of third attaché, having good reason to believe that an influential lady will support his application. But, while awaiting his nomination, he devours a portion of his patrimony. To re-establish the equilibrium, he will marry the first heiress who falls in his way; whether maid or widow, known or unknown, is of not the slightest consequence. He will continue his edifying suppers as usual; but he will accompany his wife to mass, and will gallantly carry madame's missal. To the old debt, he will annually add a new one; and will afterwards assert his profound respect for Family and Property. For, that is the motto inscribed on his banner.

* See page 7 of the present volume.

As to the woman of the world. Once married, the best proof she thinks she can give of her brilliant education, is to affect, under every circumstance, as much indifference for intellectual topics as is felt by the peasant girl who spins with a distaff while she keeps her sheep. For what, in fact, are poetry, truth, morality, good or evil, peace or war? Tiresome stupidities. As if a woman of fashion had time to spend on books or pedantic conversation! In winter, she is obliged to call and be called on, to receive and be received at evening parties. What with balls, concerts, and Bouffes theatres, it is as much as she can do to run through a realist novel. At the first note of the nightingale, she is off to Plombières or Biarritz, to display a succession of wonderful costumes at the summer carnival of watering-places.

When a woman eradicates thought from her mind, she digs a gulf, which she immediately tries to fill with rags and frippery. She then exhibits upon her person those dreams, or rather those nightmares, of fashion, which are as the morbid eruptions of an unhealthy imagination on the surface of the skin. The spirit of an epoch certainly influences the form of its costume; and the costume, in turn, exerts its reaction on thought. Some unknown philosopher will one day write a chapter on this branch of history. Fashion is by no means the matter of chance which people are apt to believe it to be. There exists a mysterious correspondence between the opinions of a people and their costume. Unfortunately, we no longer possess for the reception of our enormous feminine circumferences, the unlimited apartments and the extravagant furniture of the reign of Madame de Pompadour. Our little rooms, with their economised space, are obliged to find stowage for an assemblage of hen-coops garnished with lace and ribbons. And that is only the grotesque side of the question. When a woman's only care is to be resplendent, and announce her approach by a noise like a rattlesnake, it is because she is anxious to please. Now, from coquetry to gallantry the distances are measured by opportunity. Want of occupation, with an empty mind, naturally engenders weariness; weariness, in turn, looks out for amusement. If a woman is by herself, with no mental resources of her own to draw upon, when she has looked at her face for an hour in the glass, she can bear the infliction no longer. She is obliged to escape from herself, no matter on what conditions.

If, however, the yellow fever of luxury were confined to what are called the upper classes of society, we, humble workers, should regard with indifference the defiling of the long debauch of dress. But alas! they pitch the key-note; and little by little the contagion of finery infects everybody with the epidemic. There is not a single official's wife, with a salary of a hundred and fifty or two hundred a year, who does not do the "elegante" at least once a week, parodying on her own person Pascal's definition: "Crinoline is a circle whose centre is everywhere and its circumference nowhere."

But when people who live from hand to mouth try to rival with great fortunes, it happens that while the latter only spend their incomes, the former make a hole in their capital. It does not suffice to be fond of show; you must have the means of paying for show.

Look at this household, which is in easy circumstances! The husband and the wife, together, make out an income of six or eight hundred pounds a year; namely, an estate in Picardy, Aunt Martha's bequest, a quarter share in a house, and some money in the Funds. But monsieur is fond of curiosities, madame is fond of dress, and both are fond of keeping up appearances. Do you know what "keeping up appearances" in Paris means? It means a set of apartments in a fashionable quarter, and a man-servant who can polish floors, who can drive you in a hired carriage to take four hours' dust in the Bois de Boulogne, and can then take the covers off the chairs for a dinner-party, and for an evening-party after the dinner. Without the dinner, the evening party could not come off. With a cup of tea, merely escorted by modest cake, you might preach everlastingly in the desert. It is the dinner which forms the nucleus, and acts as the centre of attraction.

And do not suppose that it now-o-days suffices for a middle-class hostess to serve to her middle-class guests, as formerly, the soup, the made dish, the roast, the salad, the sweet dish, the fruit, and the cheese. She must serve her floor-polisher, disguised as a maître d'hôtel; a bouquet of Cape heaths, interlarded with gardenias; half a dozen glasses of all dimensions, ranged according to their height, like the reeds in a Pan's-pipe, for all the wines (more or less apocryphal) of Christendom; the bill of fare scrupulously stuck in the napkin, that the guest may reserve his strength for his favourite dishes; finally, all the aristocratic dishes of the day.

But the best dish, the dish of honour, to serve, is a decorated guest, an eminent functionary, if not a senator, at least an inspector-general, a writer, a novelist, a painter, a sculptor, a photographer, never mind who, never mind what, a rope-dancer, so that his name is notorious. When the dinner is over, the evening-party begins; it begins even before the end of the dinner. The hosts hire musicians by the hour—singers, actors, actresses, who sing and spout alternately operatic fragments and tragic tirades. All this is wearisome, costly, and must be paid for. At first they buy on credit; but credit is only an additional luxury. The bills fall due with the punctuality of June following May and April. Then the estate in Picardy is mortgaged; what Aunt Martha left is pawned. At last, falls the avalanche of debts swollen by accumulated interest. It is the doleful hour of execution, seizures, and stamped leaves of ill-omened paper.

In this way does sybaritism ravage at once the past and the future; the past, by devouring capital already created; the future, by intercepting savings, that is to say, the reproduction

of wealth. Now, by suppressing savings, Sardanapalus [by "Sardanapalus," M. Pelletan only means extravagant luxury, and the despotism which that luxury exerts on society] destroys something more than wealth in perspective; he destroys the first of household virtues.

But how is the sponge to be passed over the slate and the household set afloat again? By work? But they don't know how to work, and are not possessed of a single talent for work. There are only two ways of coining money and improvising an income—a place under government, or a lucky hit at the Bourse—intrigue or stock-jobbing.

It is sad to say, but a portion of France regards the State as an universal "Uncle from America," kept in reserve by destiny, as the friend in need of all who have run through their patrimony. Certainly, the service of the state is honourable, when a man has gained his position by his merit. But when an individual without right or capacity demands a place as he would demand alms, and when he holds out his hand at the door of an ante-chamber as he would hold out his basin for soup at the door of a convent, the time is almost come to add a new clause to the law against mendicancy.

What makes a MAN is the spirit of work, which engenders the spirit of liberty, which in turn develops the riches of a nation. Private virtue comes to the aid of public virtue; pride in the individual becomes dignity in the citizen; both united, constitute the greatness of the country. History has noted that in the eighteenth century, wherever Protestantism lived side by side with Catholicism, it surpassed its neighbour in ability and wealth. The revocation of the Edict of Nantes, by systematically excluding Protestants from every favour and every function, forced them into self-dependence and the acquirement of an iron will.

But a petitioner is neither a will nor a person. He is a worn-out coin, a note of a broken bank, a social cipher, another man's man, a patron's man and a patron's wife's man. He carries madame's letters to the post, he takes out madame's dog for a walk. Madame is over fifty; for him she is but twenty. He accepts the fiction; he has neither an opinion nor human self-respect. A valet condemned to crawl before another valet who has a bit more lace on his livery, he receives a rebuff, and smiles; they say "No" to him, and he smiles; they turn him out of the ante-chamber, and he continues to smile. He wears a stereotyped smile. When he begins to doubt his own success, he sets on his wife to renew the charge. Still young and handsome, she endeavours to soften the brazen front of bureaucracy. The Arabs have an admirable proverb: "If the man whom you want to make use of, is riding an ass, say to him, 'What a beautiful horse you have got, my lord!'" It comprises, between the first word and the last, the complete art of getting on.

But is it always possible to reckon on a place under government, to refresh the faded splen-

dours of one's household? Out of a thousand applicants, only one succeeds; the hope of place is a mere lottery ticket. There remains, then, the desperate resource of speculation at the Bourse—or rather of speculation on your neighbour's purse. For what is the Bourse? The communism of luck. All is open to everybody. You enter with an empty wallet, you walk out with a million of francs in it. That is what is said; but wait an instant.

There are two sorts of gamblers at the Bourse, the big ones and the little ones. The big ones, the gamblers certain of winning, occupy high positions. They are versed in the mysteries of the game. They haul millions by shovelfuls, and spend them as quickly, in order to have the pleasure of getting them back again. Those gentlemen mostly buy what they call "an affair"—a mine, a factory, a contract. They pay a certain sum for it on Saturday, and on Sunday they sell it for four times its cost, to a good-natured company, of which they naturally take the direction. They then issue half the shares, keeping the other half in their pocket-book. Thanks to their credit as thorough-grained rogues, the shares issued sell for a premium, which increases and rises like the flowing tide. Then, when it seems to have reached the maximum, they throw upon the market, at one single cast, the other half of the shares which they held in reserve. They flood the market; the tumble begins. The fall, driven on by panic, descends below all reasonable limits. When it has reached its lowest point, the founders of the company, little by little, buy up the panic-stricken shares, which soon rise again to par, and the see-saw of the market recommences. By this very simple game, millions of francs are realised. We may, therefore, consider every financial company which gambles at the Bourse, as a machine organised by clever rogues for turning simpletons to profit.

What is stock-jobbing? A traffic on the chance of a profit. Everybody enjoys the liberty of estimating an imaginary profit according to his own fancy. He also enjoys the liberty of selling at a fancy price, his hypothetical profits. Hence stock-jobbing.

As man is of a prudent nature, and money still more so, it appears at first sight that an uncertain enterprise would always be quoted below its real value; for uncertainty, economically speaking, is a cause of depreciation. And this would evidently be the case if every one bought the share which gives him the right to an eventual dividend, with the intention of keeping it and making an investment of it. But, on the contrary, the share is bought, simply to give it an increased value, and to sell it again at a premium, thanks to its conventional increase of value. In order that there should be a premium, there must be a rise; and in order that there should be a rise, there must be a set of men interested in causing a rise. Wherever there is a chance of a premium, this set of men flocks to the banquet. Exactly as turning-tables turn all the better the more you are anxious to see them

turn, so do the shares of a company rise, in proportion to the anxiety to see them rise. The more they rise, the more they are bought up to profit by the difference; and the more they are bought up, the higher they mount, in accordance with the axiom of political economy that value is in direct proportion to demand. A rise, therefore, in the stock-jobbing world is the cause of further rise, and causes it artificially, irrespective of the value of the thing offered for sale. As long as the ascensional period lasts, all goes right for everybody, alternately purchaser and seller. I buy a bit of paper for ten francs, and I sell it for twenty to a third purchaser, who re-sells it for thirty to a fourth; and so on, ad infinitum. Up to that point, every one of us has realised a profit without being a halfpenny out of pocket. If the rise could continue to all eternity, man would have discovered the philosopher's stone. He would be able to produce wealth at will, without betaking himself to any sort of labour. Unfortunately, there arrives a time when the ever-ascending advance attains a figure so utterly disproportioned to real value, that nobody can expect any further advance. But, as the last holder of the share would then be obliged to discharge the whole series of premiums previously pocketed by the whole series of gamblers, he endeavours as quickly as possible to pass on to other hands this dangerous share which is laden with so heavy a mortgage.

The share, being more eagerly offered than sought for, goes down for the very same reason that it went up. For, as has been stated, in political economy value is always equivalent to demand. Stock-jobbing is like the children's game in which the last spark of a dying brand is rapidly passed on from hand to hand. "The little goodman is still alive!" And it goes, and travels on, and returns, and goes on again, without cessation, as long as the spark is visible. "The little goodman is still alive!" But the moment it is extinguished in the hand of a child, that child has to pay a forfeit to all the other children.

The downfall is terrible. The advance was certain and regular; for, to the calculation of profits, people bring a certain amount of reflection. But, when an enterprise founded on stock-jobbing begins to sink, there is no possible transition or halting-place. Every one is afraid of seeing his house fall in over his head. This is the reason why every stock-jobbing epoch has been followed by a terrible financial crisis. How should it be otherwise? Stock-jobbing, which is only gaming on a large scale, creates no new wealth, any more than any other game. It only causes wealth already created, to change its owners. One man is obliged to pay what another man gains, and frequently without being provided with the means of payment, and expecting to be paid instead of paying. He cannot help becoming bankrupt. But bankruptcy, like misfortune, never comes alone. One ruined fortune always drags down other fortunes. The financial dis-

aster, reverberated from echo to echo, at last shakes the whole framework of society.

Nor is this all. By offering to the capitalist, from day to day, a sort of improvised profit, immensely superior to the ordinary profits of money out at interest anywhere else, stock-jobbing decoys into its den the available capital of the nation, and withdraws it from useful and productive undertakings, whether industrial or agricultural. It thus diminishes reproductive labour, and thereby diminishes the national wealth to exactly the same amount. Consequently, history testifies that every stock-jobbing epidemic has always impoverished the people and sterilised labour for a long time afterwards.

Never mind; the game is begun. It is opened by great speculators, to pillage little gamblers. Although the dupes have seen the swindlers a dozen times at work, they will bet against them again, all the same. They will go to that terrible Quincampoix-street and dabble in shares there from morning till night; they will roll in the gutter if they can only catch some little bespattering of wealth. The princess who used to throw a handful of gold coin out of her palace window, in order to see the crowd grovelling for it in the mud, was the first to enjoy the spectacle of bubble companies and their consequences.

Extravagance excites to gambling, and gambling in turn excites to immorality. The Bourse, in fact, tears man away from his providential destiny, from the austere life of labour, which alone can teach him the value of every moment, and the virtue of every drop of sweat. It fires, moreover, in the heart of the gambler a furious appetite for wealth: not for wealth laboriously and honourably acquired, but for wealth suddenly snatched as with the stroke of a wand. To appease this thirst for gold at any price, the father of a family will intrepidly brave all considerations of honour and prudence; he will unhesitatingly and shamelessly throw on the gambling-table his wife's dowry, his last scrap of patrimony, his child's last morsel of bread. Does he lose? He will live as he can. He will walk the streets and turn chevalier d'industrie. His wife and daughter must do as he does. Does he win? He will sacrifice what he has won, to pleasure; for one vice always enrols another vice in its train, through the effect of natural sympathy. What matters it how much money is thus squandered in ostentation or debauchery? More is to be had whenever he wants it. According to his notions, gambling is a complaisant cashier deputed to supply his expenses indefinitely.

Our Provincial Notary (for he is a Notary) once had occasion to call on one of these sure and certain stock-jobbers who practise the art of winning millions by abridged methods. He was formerly a sort of jack-of-all-trades who lived from hand to mouth, the king of the moles knows only how. He had tried painting, then sculpture, then travelling in foreign parts at the government expense. At present, he inhabits a

new hotel in the Champs Elysées. He wanted to buy an historical mansion, with the probable intention of assuming the owner's name, and had written to our notary to treat for the purchase. When the visitor entered the court of the hotel, a bevy of red-waistcoated grooms were rubbing down some half-dozen English horses. After mounting a marble staircase lighted by a colossal gilded lantern, he found in the vestibule a valet de chambre, with white cravat and full-blown calves, who introduced him to an immense glazed gallery lined with camellias and greenhouse plants. Some secret ennui hovered in the atmosphere; at the first step, you breathed a sort of vapour of opium. You walked between a double row of perches tenanted by parrots of different nations. There were red, blue, green, grey, yellow, and white; but all were pining with nostalgia. At the extremity of the gallery there was a little table standing in front of a Renaissance chimney-piece; for at that time, the master breakfasted alone, always alone, off a roll and a cup of chocolate; his stomach already was beginning to rebel. After inflicting a quarter of an hour's suspense, he condescended to make his appearance. This six or seven times millionaire was a once-young man with a nose awry. His eyes lacked lustre and he carried Night on his countenance. He had been improvising millions at the Bourse for scarcely four years, and had already exhausted all the curiosities of pleasure. Nothing was able to stir his nerves. Champagne, to him, was mere spiritless froth. He yawned, dozed, seemed to be always dozing; he walked like one who walks in his sleep. His spleen had infected the walls of his hotel. The parrots looked like his detached thoughts, embodied and fixed on perches. With him, no sympathy with art or thought; not a book, not a picture. Once he went so far as to buy a museum of things to be kept under lock and key, or better, burnt. And this is all for which that man had devoured at the Bourse the patrimony of three or four hundred families. Think what an expense of corruption must be incurred, to stir the soul of this used-up financier!

He mistook the way to happiness, which exists only in the mind and through the mind. When a man, abandoned by the divinity within him, demands of his riches the fugitive joys of the senses instead of the inexhaustible pleasures of thought and conscience, he interrogates matter in vain; he can only draw from it the gloomy melancholy of Sardanapalus and Tiberius.

Our Provincial remarks that France has always been timorous. An occasional consequence of fear is ferocity: a constant one, stupidity. He was one day dining with a gentleman six feet high, with two thousand a year in woods and vineyards. When coffee came in, some one spoke of the expedition to Mexico, and mentioned that he had lost a friend from the yellow fever.

"Monsieur," dryly interrupted the host, "there has never been any yellow fever in Mexico." He immediately shut the door of the saloon and closed the window-shutters. He

doubtless feared that the outside air had overheard the conversation, and would denounce him as a traitor to the state.

One evening, a witty cornet-à-piston, who is fond of his joke, entered the Passage Choiseul in company with a friend. "You see all these blazing shops," he said, "and all these noodles staring in at the windows. Shall I make them all disappear in the twinkling of an eye? Stop there a moment, and take particular care not to laugh." Before his companion had time to reply, he advanced into the passage shaking both his fists, and shouting at the top of his voice, "What are you doing here? Haven't you read the ordonnance which orders people to go home at ten o'clock? Leave instantly, or I will have you all arrested." There then passed over the crowd, which was lounging about with drowsy step, as it were a sort of gust of wind, which swept them before it like dry leaves in autumn. Before you could say Jack Robinson, the gallery was empty. The frightened shopkeepers put up their shutters. In another minute the gas was turned off, and the passage as silent as the grave.

The cornet-à-piston, pointing to the gallery, then all silent and dark, quietly remarked, "After this, who will presume to say that the French are not a governable people?"

To love, is the perfectioning of man's moral nature. But what do we mean by loving? Is it to wander from door to door, to have and never to hold, to be incessantly tying together a bouquet which is as incessantly untied, and then to toss it carelessly into the stream? That is not love, but vagabondage. True love consists in taking a woman by the hand, to live beside the same hearth in indissoluble intimacy, mutually sworn and consecrated, with no thought of ever separating. Love, so conceived, is marriage. But what is marriage? Our Notary's experience enables him to answer the question.

A man, frequently an old man, selects a girl, and conducts her with great pomp and a veil on her head, to a spot designated for that sort of ceremony, before a functionary wearing a scarf round his waist. And there, after summary interrogation of their christian and surnames, the municipal pontiff takes a civil code out of his pocket, wipes his spectacles, and in a more or less irreproachable tone of voice, according to the patois of the neighbourhood, he reads a paragraph, nearly as follows:

"You, conjoint, promise protection to your conjointe; and you, conjointe, promise obedience to your conjoint." The man swears it, the woman swears it; after which, they both take leave of the mayor, and go and drink champagne till midnight.

A used-up bachelor hears of the existence of a marriageable young lady; he obtains information respecting her portion and her expectations. Expectations! Charming word to express the death of her father and mother! After this preliminary inquiry, *de commodo et incommodo*, the suitor sends a plenipotentiary to demand the hand [read, the purse] of the

young lady, and, on the same occasion, sends a slightly poetised inventory of his own fortune. If he, likewise, have expectations in the shape of a father and mother to bury, he adds his expectations to the account. The negotiations as to the dowry advance but slowly with either party. When the matrimonial diplomacy is concluded to their mutual satisfaction, the bridegroom obtains the signal favour of an interview with the damsel bargained for. He arrives at the rendezvous, in the official costume of a candidate—fresh frizzled hair, white cravat, marsala waistcoat, and watch-chain looped in front. May he have deserved of his country sufficiently well to have also a ribbon at his button-hole! With a smile on his lip he steps into his lady-love's drawing-room. He is clever: at least he should be so for that day, even if he fall back into his natural element on the morrow. His conversation is inspired; he discourses music, poetry, and the lovely sky of Italy. Meanwhile, the damsel, seated at a corner of the window, with the modesty of a well-bred bride, stitches, embroiders, turns red and white by turns, replies in monosyllables, and thinks about the novel she is reading in secret.

The trial-scene is repeated once or twice more, perhaps thrice; four times, to be strictly correct. At the fourth interview, the lover executes a coup d'état; he ventures to offer the fair one a five-franc bouquet. Out of gratitude for this chivalrous act, Mademoiselle goes so far as to murder Beethoven's Pastoral Symphony on the piano, for the express benefit of her authorised adorer. After this summary protocol, the bride's family urges on the signature of the marriage-contract. The next day, a "lettre de faire part," on satin paper, publishes the news that Such-a-one, Chevalier of the Legion of Honour, espouses Such-a-one, legitimate daughter of So-and-so, at the church of such a parish. The bride beams with happiness; she displays the contents of her "corbeille de noce" down to their most private details, such as the nightcap and chemisette trimmed with lace, and the morning dressing-gown. But in this rapid confrontation of the husband and wife before the nuptial benediction, have they had time to discover on each other's foreheads, by some somnambulistic process, the hidden mystery of their sympathies? "I don't know you—you don't know me. What does it signify? You will know me by-and-by. But if we are mistaken in each other; if the spirit of variety, which presided at the Creation, has moulded us out of antipathetic clay—you of scepticism, me of enthusiasm? Well! With Heaven's blessing, we have our whole lives before us to get use to the error."

Two young men were sitting in a fashionable circulating library.

"How much do you marry?" said one to the other.

"A hundred thousand francs," his friend replied.

"Confess, Messieurs," interposed the mistress of the establishment, "that if you could

marry the fortune without the lady, you would greatly prefer that arrangement."

"You are right," assented the first speaker.

And yet they both were young and in easy circumstances: at least to judge from their stylish appearance. "How much do you marry?" is the password of a certain portion of Young France. They consider marriage as a branch of the Bourse, and as a last resource for paying the tailor. But what prospects are in store for the girl who is dependent on a man who has taken her by estimate, for the making up of a budget exhausted by dissipation? The husband, once set up again, will return to the habits of his youth, with all the ardour of a lucky gamester for pleasures abstained from for economical reasons. He will go to the club, the café, the Bois de Boulogne; in the evening to the theatre, in a latticed box. He will leave home early and return late, to escape from the ennui, the burden of his house, from himself, from his wife, whose looks are a reflexion of the remorse he feels within.

Open any report of judicial statistics, and you will see a progressive increase of actions for separation, and murders for jealousy; which mean that the husband forgets his wife, and that the wife in turn forgets her husband; that the heart ought to have its share in the marriage-contract, and that if its claims be denied, it will go and seek what it wants, elsewhere. To save a country, you must save the sanctity of family ties; for a nation is nothing but an extensive family. It should never be forgotten that dissipation is the preparatory school for servitude. Venice knew it by experience when she made the carnival the first article of the constitution of despotism.

There is one special season of the year when the Parisian mandarins of high degree allow themselves unwonted licence—at the very carnival alluded to. Did you ever hear a description of a masked ball given by one of the princes of the bank or of diplomacy? You behold there, it appears, a quantity of abstract and concrete poesies realised by milliners: Nights, that is petticoats, besprinkled with stars; Auroras, that is, pink satin corsets, from which the disk of the sun is emerging; Snows and Lightnings, that is to say, tufts of eider-down and zigzag red and orange ribbons. An original lady has appeared as a Windmill. One year, the hero of a masked ball was an American of Homeric stature and herculean muscularity. He was announced as "The Devil, in his wedding dress." He wore tight satin small-clothes and waistcoat, and on his forehead a pair of diamond horns. The ladies mounted on their chairs, to admire this brilliant specimen of the Yankee race.

After supper, towards cock-crow, when the truffled pâté, the Tokay wine, the blood heated by the dance, the gas, the music, the dust, the flowers, and other electric miasms which load the atmosphere, have sufficiently stirred up the courage of the Snows, the Nails, and the Nights, by a tacit accord they shake off etiquette, and dance

by inspiration the dances of Mabilie, without having taken lessons therein.

And so the youth who goes to Paris to seek his fortune is tempted to enjoy it before he has earned it; he ravages the future before he possesses the present. One day his heart fails him. He has no longer the strength to decide on a different starting-point. Madness misleads him to the river-side. The low parapet invites him. A dull sound in the water is heard, and the stream flows on. After a while, the Morgue exhibits one body more to the gaze of the multitude.

SHAKESPEARE MUSIC.

IN THREE ACTS.

THIRD ACT. COMEDIES—PLAYS OF SENTIMENT—SONGS.

THE comedies of Shakespeare have been less frequented by the musician than his fantastic plays, or those of passion and sentiment. Good themes for unmixed mirth, set to dramatic melody, are not easy to find. Very small is the amount of purely comic operas which deserve to last. In selecting their subjects, however, the composers have ruled their proceedings with a certain caprice. Not an eye—to instance from Shakespeare—seems to have been turned towards *Taming the Shrew*, clearly as the characters are marked, and strong as are the situations;—whereas *Love's Labour Lost* has been more than once attempted, and, at the time being, has been pressed by Parisian adapters into the service of Mozart's music, to replace in his "*Così fan tutte*" the utterly weak and monstrous story by which so much of the beauty of so beautiful a work has been damaged, if not destroyed.

Among all the comedies, the one most in favour among the musicians has been *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. The raciness of the story, the excellent opportunity afforded for acting and singing, without any great requirement of youth and beauty in the heroines, the working out of the broad mirth of the intrigue by the false supernatural scenes round Herne's oak, the love comedy of Anne and her suitors, are all so many excellent temptations.—The first who yielded to them was Salieri at Vienna, the master whose name has undeservedly lain under a cloud, as though he had been the cause, not merely of Mozart's denied prosperity, but even (slander went on to whisper) of his death. The tale of Salieri having contrived, or attempted, to poison the composer of *Don Juan* (which that facile and credulous genius is said to have believed), still lurks and summers in by-places, on the charitable hypothesis of there never being smoke without fire, and some geographical superstition that all Italians must be born poisoners! Nothing that is known of Salieri justifies the malignant anecdote. He appears to have been an amiable, friendly man, not illiberal to other artists, trusted by Gluck, grateful to Gassmann, who took charge in part of his early education—speaking a sort of polyglot dialect, and as fond as a child of sweetmeats;—a composer of unquestioned

merit, forming one of the group of Italians to which belong Cherubini, Spontini, and Muzio Clementi, and best known by his setting of Beaumarchais's *Tarare*. His *Falstaff*, produced in Vienna, to Italian words, is only known by one air, "*La stessa stessissima*," and that air recollected for no remarkable beauty, but because Beethoven treated it as a theme for variation.

Far better has *The Merry Wives* been set for Germany since Salieri's time, though by a composer far inferior to himself, Nicolai. There is no modern German comic opera of greater, if of equal merit. Without any such originality as Weber stamped on every bar of melody that he wrote, the music is spirited and well knit, never affected, never flagging; with a comic humour, too sparingly to be enjoyed in light German music. The voices are nicely handled, the instrumentation is sprightly and solid, without being overcharged. One passage merits higher praise: the instrumental night-prelude at the foot of Herne's oak, which is about as good a picture in music as could be named. The man who wrote this opera (only his second one, the first having been a setting of *Ivanhoe*) might have done much to revive lively German stage music (at present in a deplorable plight of feebleness), had he lived to follow out his career.

Then, there is our lively countryman, Mr. Balfe—the composer among composers in being—into whose lap the largest number of capital chances have been showered; no one, in our recollection, having been so fortunate in his singers. Think of having for *Falstaff*, Lablache; for *Fenton*, Rubini; for *Mrs. Ford*, Grisi; for *Master Brook*, Tamburini. "I hope here is a play fitted." That Mr. Balfe takes his art lightly, is part and parcel of his nature. Occasionally, most happy as a melodist, always writing for the voice that which is becoming to sing, he has proved himself too easily contented with a few happy strokes and attractive touches, and to leave more of his work imperfectly thought and wrought out, than the man must do who desires that such work should live. Perhaps in none of his operas, now numbering some half a hundred, has he been more unequal than in this particular one. It is hard to forgive this inequality in one who is capable of producing a piece of comic music so capital as the trio of the *Wives* and Anne, where the effect of unison, so intolerably abused by the modern Italians (Signor Rossini began it in *La Gazza Ladra*), is turned to the happiest, drollest, possible account; but not a note beyond this, from Mr. Balfe's *Falstaff*, is even already left alive.

There is a setting of *The Comedy of Errors*, operatically, as *Gli Equivoci*, by some Italian composer, but the name has escaped me. The task was alike a hopeless and ridiculous one; the very want of variety in the characters which makes the embroilments of the buffoonery of the play so hopelessly comical, must lead to a corresponding monotony and confusion in the music, if the play be set with intelligence.

But in nothing have the freaks of preference been stranger than in this world through which we are wandering. Hermione and Leontes, Florizel and Perdita, have been left untouched as opera characters, though a more delicious subject for music hardly exists than *The Winter's Tale*. Had Mendelssohn lived, he was strongly inclined to make the attempt. As matters stand, the play was the other day decked with music for the German stage, from the feeble hand of M. von Flotow. Then, *As You Like It*, though spoiled for the French theatre by Madame George Sand, who hardly invented a new catastrophe, has been left alone, save by Arne and Bishop (of whom more anon), though in that delicious play are groups and contrasts wooing to the musician. On the other hand, it only the other day occurred to that perverse man of talent, M. Berlioz, to make a Shakespeare opera as well as a Shakespeare symphony; and his choice fell, with characteristic perversity, on a comedy than which hardly a more unsuitable one for his purpose could be named—*Much Ado About Nothing*.

A hundred good reasons could be given why there is no possible representation of wit in music. See how the aroma of Beaumarchais's brilliant dialogue has failed to penetrate the music of Mozart's *Figaro*, which is seriously sentimental; and *Figaro* has situations for the four principal characters for which the keen encounter of Benedick with Lady Disdain finds no place. Their ringing game with foils (those their sharp tongues) cannot be told in music. Take it away, and they are little more than a walking gentleman and lady. "Nothing," wrote an acute German critic, "lies further from music than irony." And hence, if there were no reason beyond, the work proves a piece of weak and elaborate pedantry; and the story, in the attempt to make it comic, has been patched by a character in the most faded style of Italian buffoonery—pitiful heavy substitute for the delights of *Dogberry* and *Verges*. The music is, for the most part, in the ambitious yet entangled manner of M. Berlioz, just now characterised; but it contains one duet of exceptional beauty, in a superfluous scene: a night-piece for Hero and "her gentlewoman"—added by the strangely enthusiastic student of Shakespeare. It is one of the oddest inconsistencies occurring in the story of the most inconsistent of the acts (which music, indeed, is), that one whose fancies are so weak and embroiled, and whose forms are such heaps of confusion and disproportion, should have had "a flash" (to use Sydney Smith's word) of such beauty, simplicity, and tender clearness, as are to be found in this exquisite duet. The spirit of the scene where Lorenzo and Jessica "out-night" each other in verse, whose music defies music, breathes in this charming composition. There is nothing like it from the same pen.

With the above, we arrive at the end of the list of operas suggested by Shakespeare's plays, and also of the most important illustrations to them. But these do not make, up one-half of

the mass of music to which he has given occasion, in the form of settings of his songs or passages of poetry. Anything like enumeration of them is utterly out of the question. Some of the happiest only can be mentioned.

A jewel in the enormous cabinet is Haydn's canzonet "She never told her love," one of the happiest examples of accompanied recitative in being—perhaps the most expressive of his most expressive compositions—those, we mean, which owe their creation to the influence of English seriousness on the light-hearted and skilful musician. That he was deepened and enlarged as a poet by his residence in London, there is ample evidence, and he had that youngest of natures which never rests self-content, but is willing to learn, to gather, to adopt. He was set on fire by hearing the works of Handel in England, when he was an elderly man, and thence came *The Creation*. The discoveries of the youngster, Mozart, excited him, if not to alter, to enrich his style, as his latest stringed quartets (there are some eighty in all!) attest. For so cheerful, so vain a man, so easily contented, moreover, with little pleasures, so circled by friends and patrons, there was a remarkable amount of honesty in Haydn: the truest artistic spirit. Possibly Shakespeare's words were suggested to him by that showy lady, Mrs. John Hunter, whose musical parties, we have been told, so discomposed her husband, the redoubtable anatomist, but who was no bad writer of verse for music. In any case, he set them once for all.

So, again, it would not be a wise proceeding in any song-writer and new, to handle "Hark, hark, the lark," with such perfection have those words been set by Francis Schubert (an English lady has reverently added a second verse). It is among the half-dozen best Shakespearian songs in being: and in this country has entirely superseded Doctor Cooke's pretty but shallow glee. The true lyric spirit has hardly been ever more picturesquely manifested than in the young, fertile, unequal, Viennese composer. There is nothing more utterly pertinent than his treatment of Scott's "Ave Maria," save it be this matin song. It may be commemorated, that never has this been sung with such exquisite freshness, delicacy, and relish, as by one of a great dramatic family, the last of the Kembles! By its side, Schubert's "Who is Sylvia?" is tame and characterless.

Arne must be named once again, as having written one of the best English songs existing, in his "Blow, blow, thou winter's wind." There is a careless, open-air pathos in that tune; a forest tone, and yet a court grace, not to be excelled. "Arden Wood" is in it, if there be such a thing as scenery, and spirit, and colour in music. No one sings it now-a-days, however; perhaps because no one can sing it. A conformable Amiens is not an every-day person. Of all Arne's Shakespearian melodies, this is assuredly the best.

Then, Bishop's Shakespeare songs demand yet a few words, in addition to those already

spoken. He had a real genius, a spirit of melody within him, which set him on high and apart among the people who to-day make tunes without time, and who arrange the same to words on some notion (dim and distant enough God wot!) that poetry is possibly more poetical than the pence-table. He had a true, appreciating relish for Shakespeare;—and though he could be careless, common, coarse even, in many of his concessions and spoiliations of foreign music—and his vulgar things aimed at the shilling gallery—Bishop was a man of genius. Among the many uses to which the plays have been put were those belonging to a time when English opera was weak and undecided in its form, yet when the stage had such charmers as a Stephens and a Tree—no great dramatic artists, it is true, and less accomplished musicians than are demanded by modern intelligence, but in beauty of voice, and gracious refinement of manner, not approached by any of their successors.—For them were many of Shakespeare's plays enlarged with introduced music by Bishop: a large portion of which is excellent, the words being drawn from the dramas and the poems. He was like other fertile musicians—Handel, Mozart, Mendelssohn, Signor Rossini—given to thieving. Memory cannot help it: and there are as few original tunes, perhaps, as there are original tales. The grand bravura from Vinci's *Artaserse*, "Vo solcando," can hardly have been "out of mind" when he threw off "Bid me discourse;" but the coincidence does not destroy the youth of that beautiful song. We have never admired Sir Joshua's "Mrs. Siddons as the Tragic Muse" less because we have known of the picture by Domenichino in which the attitude is all but identical—to the demolition of a favourite anecdote, that it was invented by our Tragic Muse. Nor do we care much if the great Rubens's "Deposition" at Antwerp was suggested by an Italian print. The daintiness and perfect freedom of "Bid me discourse," the becoming display of a sweet voice which it encourages, are in time, and tone, and tune with the delicious words. The latest singer of it, perhaps, was also musically the best—Madame Sontag. Her delicacy, her abandonment to the poetry of the song, are never to be forgotten, nor her beautiful pearly English, without a touch in it of foreign over-precision. Like other composers (and thieves), Bishop thieved from himself—indulged largely in repetition. There are three after-draughts from the spring which had yielded "Bid me discourse." "Should he upbraid" was the best of these;—of course because that graceful song was also written to Shakespeare's words.

Bishop, too, was great in Shakespeare duets, and in these, again, he stole from, or repeated himself, without fear or apology. "As it fell upon a day," "On a day" (both introduced into plays, as has been mentioned), were again repeated or had been foreshadowed (?) in "Orpheus with his lute;" that sweetest of all the songs—that loveliest, simplest, briefest tribute to the power of sound ever thrown off by music clad in mortal words. Again and again has it fasci-

nated composers of every strength, of every time. Linley treated them well, though in too patchy and ambitious a fashion; Mr. Hatton, not long ago, skilfully, on the revival of the historical play by Mr. Charles Kean;—but the best setting of them (and a score rise up to memory) is the last one, from a woman's hand, and an amateur one, moreover—the song by Miss Gabriel. There is yet a Shakespearian duet in another form, measure, and humour, which must be named ere we take leave of Bishop. This is, "Say, though you strive to steal yourself away," than which few more charming two-part songs have ever been penned. The composer, however, has availed himself of the subtlety of the words too courageously: for the sake of his effects, escaping from his text more than his wont. The duet, however, is an excellent one. There have been few, if any, so good and so individual written in England since Bishop's time.

With his name, then, I had best stop; the catalogue, as was said on the outset, not pretending to be complete. There are overtures by the twenty, ditties by the hundred, glees by the thousand, which could be told over. In what has been said in the works I have selected, how wide and varied and universal is the range of sympathy and indication sketched out of all time—for all men in all the Arts!

AN IRON STORM AT SHOEBOURNE.

THE reader has probably observed, that at the point where a narrow but populous thoroughfare joins some larger and still more frequented roadway, the angle of the kerbstone is sometimes quite rounded off by the continually rushing traffic, and is an angle no longer. Now, there is a certain water thoroughfare in this country, called the Thames; and those who pursue it to the particular place where it rushes into the sea, will observe that the continually alternating traffic of the fresh water downward, and of the salt water upward, has entirely rounded off the corners of that portion of Great Britain which lies at that point of junction, where our fine old river runs into the German Ocean.

At one of these turning-points or corners there is situated a town which is, perhaps, the most detestably hideous place upon the surface of the globe—I say this, knowing Woolwich and Chatham, and fully conscious how briskly they compete for the proud distinction. The name of this victorious place is Sheerness. Sheerness is the most odious place that man—making the most of the natural aids at his command—has ever succeeded in constructing. No other town can enter into competition with it. There is but one Sheerness—though it must be owned, in common justice, that Woolwich is its Prophet.

At the other and opposite corner to that occupied by this detested settlement stands Shoeboorne. Shoeboorne is a place to which I would recommend any gentleman who is fond of

a north-east wind to devote his exclusive attention for a month or two in early spring. If it should happen that the same individual who possesses this taste is also partial to prospects characterised by a certain bareness of look, if he be fond of stunted trees, for instance, if he would like a chance twice in every twenty-four hours of spending six hours in the contemplation of several miles of wet mud—then would he find himself in his element at Shoeburyness.

Everybody knows that Shoeburyness is the scene of several terrific combats, which have taken place at various times between the guns of Mr. Whitworth and Sir William Armstrong on the one side, and, on the other, the iron targets, which, at the expense of a couple of thousand pounds or so apiece, are erected by various illustrious mechanics for the purpose of being battered to pieces. Any one, however, who did *not* know this, would have his ignorance removed very quickly, when he found himself standing on the battle-field where these desperate engagements have taken place. The evidences of recent warfare are to be seen in every direction, and are unmistakable. Ruin and devastation everywhere, and iron run, and iron devastation. The objects, the shattered remnants of which you see at every turn, are not—as you might at first imagine, seeing how utterly they are broken to pieces and destroyed—mere fabrics of wood or some yet more frail material. It is iron—iron, the hardest that can be got, chosen for its strength, that one finds here crushed into unseemly shapes and beaten into atoms. Massive plates, five and six inches thick, and fastened with iron rivets of prodigious strength, to huge beams of wood, lie about here twisted, and rent, and torn to pieces. The beams are broken, the rivets are scattered in all directions, their heads lie thick upon the ground, like the berries under a September mulberry-tree. As to the great earth-works thrown up behind the targets, no doubt they get some uncomfortable knocks too, but they stand it well, and the dust comes together again when the splinter of a shell has parted it, and the evidence of the wound is pretty well effaced. But the targets themselves lie about upon the ground in such contortions as almost to suggest a thing in pain, with such ghastly wounds, such ragged indentations all over them, that you feel something nearly akin to pity as you note how nobly they have resisted, and how cruelly they have suffered.

While you are observing all these things, and are noticing with a divided attention that in the distance a swarm of men in white dresses, who look something between stokers and house-painters, are busy adjusting guns in their places by means of some enormous three legged engines which look like preposterously strong easels—you are suddenly brought to yourself by the sound of a bugle, which “warbles”—to use Mr. Tennyson’s expression—a note of warning, and the last echoes of which are succeeded by the command “Visitors retire.” The visitors take this hint with all speed, and soon find themselves in a large ungainly looking edifice,

with hugely thick walls, and a strong roof, but with an aperture at one end through which it is still possible to see what is going on outside; for one side of the building is closed with an old iron target, which, like everything else around you, shows signs of having been in the wars, and the opening in this through which you peep has been made in the course of some former experiments with shot or shell, and is irregular in shape, with ragged and torn edges. This building, like the ground outside, is strewn, as to its floor, with all sorts of scraps and fragments of iron, nuts, and rivets and screws, all broken and rusty. All is suggestive, beyond a doubt, of an iron age; the temporary inhabitants of this grim cavern are most of all suggestive in this wise. There are some officers of both services, but probably most of the company are professionally mixed up in some way or another with iron. Here are engineers, and mechanics, gun-makers, and armour-plates workers, all so redolent of iron that their very faces have something of the gravity and hardness of the metal: while one gentleman, who is himself an artificer in iron, has his head covered with short crisp wiry grey hair, which looks exactly like steel-filings. And here are gentlemen, too, to carry this idea out still further, taking notes of everything that is said and done with *metallic* pencils. Besides all these there are a few artillerymen lounging about, whose services will be required presently to keep an open space round about the target, while the effect of the shots upon its surface is being tested. Joining company with these, who are standing by that aperture through which one could see something of the world outside, I peeped through, and saw that the preparations for firing were going on briskly, and that the business of the day was about to begin.

In the middle of a great bare plain, outside, the guns with which the practice was going to be made, were ranged in a row, with their muzzles towards us; it must be remembered that the building in which we were lodged was close to, and in line with, the target. So there they stood, looking like some new kind of ferocious animal longing to be at us. The men in white dresses, who looked now more like Pierrots than stokers, were busily at work about the guns, one of which they were loading, while officers were striding about and gesticulating wildly, as is usual on all great military occasions. After a deal of this sort of thing, and when the preparations were at length complete, a word of command was given, and all the soldiers, and all the officers, commenced a hurried retreat from the neighbourhood of the guns: some retiring to stations near the target, but under shelter: and others withdrawing to a position behind that occupied by the cannons, and at a very considerable distance. So at last not a soul remained near them, and these savage monsters were seen in the middle of the plain all alone in their terrible glory. To see them standing there alone, full of mischief, and capable of creating dreadful

devastation, was very impressive, and caused one to regard them with great interest and respect. They waited with their cavernous mouths turned this way, till at last a bugle was heard to sound in the distance, and in a moment afterwards there was a flash of something, and a puff of something, and the hut received a shock, and one's ears seemed suddenly to be driven mysteriously into the interior of one's throat, and one's teeth to have become loosened, and—in a word, a gun had been fired.

We were not released from our place of retirement until this discharge had been succeeded by two others, and not then even, for a minute or two, because the air was full of all sorts of fragments which had been struck out of the target and out of the different structures near it, and which, falling on the head of one of the committee on iron, might have interfered to some extent with the clearness of his judgment. Once released, we all rushed off pell-mell to see how these blows had told. They had not told much, being only some trifles discharged from a 68-pounder of the old school, which had just dented the surface of the target a little, and flown off from its iron plates, as a peppercorn might from a cuirass.

Again we were ordered under cover, and again, after long waiting and much expectancy, our ears were driven into our throats, and our teeth loosened in their sockets. This time it was an Armstrong gun which had been tried, but it was only a 110-pounder, and the impression made upon the target was little more than in the previous experiment. So far, the iron-plated ship which the target represented was decidedly getting the best of it.

The next time we emerged from cover, it was with a considerably quickened interest. A projectile weighing nearly 300 pounds, shaped something like a very thick and blunt sugar-loaf, and standing about eighteen inches from the ground before it was placed in the gun, had been blown, with a charge of 45 lb. of powder, out of Sir William Armstrong's 300-pounder. When we reached the target, we found this trifling object lying about a dozen yards from the place where it had struck: its own force having caused it to rebound so far. It was also very much shortened by the violence of the collision, and spread out proportionably. And well it might be. It had struck full upon the seven-and-a-half inch plate—the reader is requested to remember what seven and a half inches of iron are—it had pierced this mass through, had broken one of the ship's ribs, and had given the whole structure a shake which had seriously loosened the rivets and screws that held it together. Yet this was nothing to what was coming; for the next experiment was to be made—not with a shot at all, but with a shell—a live shell weighing 286 lb., with a charge of 11 lb. of powder inside it.

If we were careful before, to get out of harm's way, we were certainly still more careful now. In that great cavern in which we were all stowed away, it has been mentioned that a great ragged breach existed, through which what was going

on outside could be seen well enough. We were all ordered away even from that aperture now, and were crowded to one side of our place of refuge. There is all the difference in the world between shot and shell; the shot could be depended on to go straight from the mouth of the gun to the target: the only cause for apprehension being that the splinters of target or pieces of the missile itself might fly off after the concussion, and so do mischief. With the shell it was different. It might burst as it left the gun, and one of its fragments might fly straight in at that breach of which mention has been made: or, as had happened on the occasion of the last experiments, the gun itself might burst, and one of its scathed atoms find its way to where we were. So we all kept to the side of the building where there was no danger, crowding together;—some of us, perhaps, glancing up now and then at an ugly long scar on that part of the brickwork which was opposite the breach, and which looked uncommonly like a mark left by some such flying messenger as we were hiding away from. As we stood thus in silent expectation, the whole aspect of the scene must have given one a good idea of what takes place in actual warfare, when some mighty fortress is being besieged by the enemy.

What a crash that was when the explosion did take place at last, and seemed to shake the very ground on which we stood! And what a rush took place as soon as prudence allowed us to go and see how the iron-clad ship had borne the blow! The woodwork at the back of it was on fire; that was the first thing that we saw, for the smoke was rising from the top of the target. The projectile had not rebounded this time. It had gone straight through the armour-plate, and had burst in the massive structure on which the plates were laid, and which represented the wooden portion of the ship's side. And there the greater portion of the shell remained firmly embedded in the wood, which had caught fire at the moment of the explosion. As one looked about and saw how the fragments of the shell, which had burst outward, had embedded themselves in the timbers of the adjacent buildings, one could form some idea of what frightful results would follow if such a missile actually penetrated to the between-decks of a ship intact, only bursting to pieces when it got among the crew.

This, however, was not accomplished either by this shell of Sir William Armstrong's or by that of Mr. Whitworth, which was next fired; no, nor by any other missile employed in that day's experiments.

The shell discharged from the Whitworth gun, which is not circular in the bore, but hexagonal, penetrated to the same depth as the Armstrong shell had done: bursting also when well through the armour-plates, and remaining, like the last, embedded in the ship's timbers. There was, however, this great difference between the two experiments. The Armstrong shell weighed nearly twice as much as the Whitworth shell,

and required nearly twice the amount of powder to drive it from the cannon, yet it went no deeper than Mr. Whitworth's missile. It is true that the hole made by the Armstrong shell was larger, though not deeper, than that made by Mr. Whitworth's; but it is a question whether this advantage is not more than compensated, for naval purposes, by the superior lightness of Mr. Whitworth's piece. If Mr. Whitworth did what he did with a 150 lb. shell and 25 lb. of powder, the inference is that he could do a great deal more with a shell weighing—as Sir William Armstrong's weighed—290 lb., and discharged—as Sir William's was discharged—by no less than 45 lb. of powder. Nor must we fail to take into consideration another very important point in favour of Mr. Whitworth's gun—the greater ease, namely, with which it may be loaded. In naval warfare, “peppering away” is the great strength of a side, and the gun which can “pepper” the enemy the greatest number of times in the course of a couple of minutes, has, in that alone, an advantage over other guns, of no trifling amount. Now, Mr. Whitworth's cannon, which drove its shell into the target to the same depth as Sir William Armstrong's, is much more easily and quickly loaded than Sir William's, and is some three or four tons lighter. It was very unfortunate, that in consequence of the existence of a flaw in the centre steel tube of Mr. Whitworth's gun, it was only deemed expedient to fire it once, and no further experiments could be made with it.

There is always something impressive in size. When a great number of objects, all of the same class, solicit one's attention, the largest of them is likely to have the greatest attraction for the greatest number of people. A gun nearly eighteen feet long, and about four feet in diameter at the breech, is a most terrible-looking engine; and I have no doubt that, on the occasion of which I am treating, the discharge of this piece of artillery was looked for by many as the great event of the day. When the bugle sounded the note of preparation, and the men, who had been busy preparing this enormous cannon to do its work of destruction, began to run away from it in all directions, seeking safety in flight and concealment, and so the great monster was left alone and dominant over the other guns which stood about it, there was something almost awful in its aspect. It was not entirely deserted, though, even yet, for one solitary individual was perched upon its breech, adjusting, it is to be supposed, the machinery connected with its firing, and making the final preparations. And small, indeed, the man looked, crawling about upon that perilous eminence; and dangerous enough his position seemed, when one reflected what was inside the monster on which he was perched, and how fraught with destruction it was. But soon even this solitary personage dismounted from his position, and when he had found for himself some secure asylum, there was but a short pause before the signal was given, and in the midst of a roaring, rushing sound, a perfect

hail of solid fragments filled the air, descending with a terrific clatter on the earth, and making us feel how wise was the precaution which had sent us all under cover of a roof. At that same moment of its discharge, the cannon, with a furious recoil, threw up its muzzle to the sky. “*Diri*, I have spoken,” it seemed to say; and then it flung its mouth up to the heavens for air.

It had spoken, however, this time to little purpose. That shower of solid objects which had seemed to darken the mouth of our retreat was raised by the contact of the shot with the earthwork near the target, after disturbing which the huge missile went on its way with unimpaired speed, and, having missed the target, and finding nothing further in its way, it tore away high over the shingle on the shore and out to sea, and there dropped, very much too near the bows of a certain brig which was passing at the time, and which very narrowly missed having its career brought to a glorious termination.

This gun spoke to better purpose later in the day, when, having taken, for the strengthening of its constitution, a powder weighing no less than 50 lb., and a steel pill of 330 lb. weight, it managed to make a hole, ten inches deep, in the side of the ship: striking it, indeed, with such force that the enormous projectile rebounded after the contact to a distance of thirty yards, where it lay, crushed out of shape, like a pugilist's fist, which suffers by the blows which he himself has inflicted; and still, after every discharge, the gun recoiled as it had done at first, and threw its muzzle upward in a sort of triumph.

There was nothing more remarkable in connexion with the whole of this remarkable scene, than the great precautions taken to prevent any one from approaching the guns about the time when they were to be fired. This struck one rather forcibly, remembering the very close quarters at which the artilleryman or the gunner must find himself with the cannon when actually engaged in hard service either on land or at sea. In either case, it is impossible not to see that the operations would be considerably retarded if it were necessary for every one who had anything to do with the working of the gun, and especially for the individual firing it, to put something like the eighth of a mile between himself and the piece before it went off. We have seen how these same precautions were observed among the lookers-on at these experiments; let us now turn for a moment in another direction.

The commandant's hut is a strongly-built shed immediately behind a powerful earthwork made in the form of a battery. In front of the hut is a flagstaff. As soon as all things are in readiness, and all the men removed out of harm's way, and stowed away into all sorts of strange nooks and corners where some shelter is afforded, the flag is run up to intimate to all whom it may concern that the firing is going to begin. This done, the commandant, who has

a bugler in attendance on him, ascends a rude ladder which leads to the top of the battery, and takes a careful survey of the scene, in order to be sure that the word of command to fire may be given with safety; at this time he also receives the report of the man who is looking out seaward, and whose business it is to be sure that there is no vessel in a line with the target and within the range. All being pronounced safe, the commandant gives the word to the bugler to "Sound attention," upon which a peculiar little sharp flourish is got out of the instrument, and a very impressive pause ensues. During that pause the officer gives one more look around, and then rapidly descending the ladder, gets under cover of the hut, and gives the word again to the bugler "Sound fire." At that moment, a figure, which has been standing by the side of a small hut perched upon the embankment of the estuary, disappears within the building, and then the usual earthquake takes place which proclaims that the piece has gone off. For a short time, which seems a long time, nobody stirs, as quantities of small fragments of iron and wood are struck out of the target, and fill the air, so that it would be dangerous to come out from under the shelter of a roof, and a pretty strong roof too. But when sufficient time has been allowed for the last of these to descend, we all emerge from cover, and rush off to inspect the target, and see what amount of damage the shot has inflicted. Unless, indeed, it should happen, which is always possible, that any member of the company feeling curious about that hut on the embankment which was just now mentioned, should walk off in that direction first, with the view of ascertaining what might be the purpose to which this small edifice is devoted. Any one fired with this noble curiosity, would observe without doubt, first, that there was a row of telegraph-poles between this same hut and the spot where the cannons were placed; secondly, as he drew nearer, that the wires which the poles supported were carried down into the interior of the building—into which, however, when the curious one sought to follow them, he would find himself repulsed by the individual in charge, who would politely but unequivocally inform him that the words "No admittance," inscribed on a board beside the hut, must be understood literally. Inside that low hovel is the machinery of the galvanic battery, by means of which the guns nearly a quarter of a mile off are instantaneously discharged when the command "Fire" is given by the commandant's bugler.

It is quite certain that whatever complaint may be made of the extravagance of the War-office, or Admiralty, no one would find any signs of lavish expenditure in the various official edifices which adorn the practising-ground at Shoeburyness. The hut devoted to the important purpose just mentioned, is one built upon the principle of that stage hovel in which Edgar is discovered in the storm-scene in *King Lear*; the shelters provided for the committee on iron, and the commandant, are rather

suggestive of cow-sheds; while a couple of rusty iron plates, leaning one against another, and looking hardly worth the consideration of a dealer in marine stores, are labelled with the imposing inscription, "For the Lords of the Admiralty." The fact is, that when that shower of fragments which follows the discharge of one of these mighty guns takes place, people are glad to put their heads into any shelter they can get.

As to what these experiments prove, and how far they are valuable in showing what we might expect were a naval engagement between iron-sided ships and rifled cannon to take place, it is not easy to speak. It is probable that the impression left upon the mind of a casual observer by the trials of strength which come off at Shoeburyness, would be, that on the whole the target has the best of it. No shell can penetrate it completely, so as to remain intact and burst when inside the ship. The worst a shell can do is to penetrate to the woodwork behind the iron plates, and there remain embedded. No doubt two or three apertures, even of this sort, if made exactly in the right places, would be very awkward things to stop; but surely it would be difficult to make such "very palpable hits" at sea. The target is quite still, is placed at the best angle for receiving the full force of the blow to be inflicted, and is exactly opposite, and on a plane parallel to that occupied by the gun. These are circumstances very much in favour of the gun and against the target. These are elaborately chosen circumstances. No doubt if a ship like the *Warrior* were to steam into Portsmouth harbour, and take up a position exactly opposite to a battery of Whitworth and Armstrong guns, the water being smooth, and the opportunities for taking a fair aim being afforded—no doubt under those circumstances she would promptly come to grief. In an engagement out at sea, with rough weather, the object to be aimed at perpetually in motion, and the position occupied by the guns equally lively, the result might be different. These are thoughts which would suggest themselves to a casual observer of these experiments; moreover, he would probably remark, as he stood behind the target when all was done, that no entire missile had passed through it, that all remained lodged in the woodwork, or rebounded from the iron plates outside; and as he examined the props, and other portions of the structure which supports the target, and which represent, in fact, the "between-decks" of a ship, he would observe how very little damage had been done—a few scratches on the wood, made by the splinters flying about, being all. On the other hand, it must be remembered, that these armour-plates experimented on at Shoeburyness are much more massive than those with which our iron ships are at present fortified; secondly, that even these were in every case perforated; lastly, that though—supposing the ship's side to be represented by this target—few lives might be lost inside the ship, and few wounds inflicted, yet the vessel herself would be so mutilated as to be put hors de combat entirely.

It is surely very desirable that some experiments should now be tried, as far as possible, surrounded by the circumstances which would attend an actual naval engagement, so that we might see the result of some shots fired from a ship well out at sea, and in motion, at another similarly situated. We might then be able to form some idea how many blows, or how few, it would take to break in a ship's cuirass, and might get, perhaps, a little nearer to setting this vexed question at rest. As the case stands, the conviction does force itself on one's mind that, being satisfied with a low rate of speed, a vessel might be constructed, so thickly plated as to be secure against any force of artillery we at present possess. It might be sluggish, difficult to manage; but it would be impregnable. It would seem to have been with an eye to some such vessel—to a floating battery, in fact—that these experiments with plates of the extraordinary thickness of six and a half and seven and a half inches have been made. We have been testing the vulnerability of ships now non-existent. No ship could carry such plates as these and be fit for active service, while, as to the armour with which our vessels are at present provided, it has been already set at naught. The plates of the Warrior were perforated long ago by a Whitworth shell driven from a Whitworth gun: the shell remaining intact in its passage through the ship's side, and bursting only when well through and in the inside of, the vessel.

PERSIAN POLITICS.

"How is it," said a despairing British diplomatist to a Persian courtier, determined to have it fairly out with him—"how is it that for some years past, my country and yours have not been good friends? England is anxious to stand well with you. She desires to see you strong and prosperous. She would be willing to aid you, if possible, against a foreign enemy, or give you every advice and assistance in her power to improve the state of your country at home. In return, she simply and loyally asks only for your friendship and good will. Why do you persist in misunderstanding us?"

"Why," replied the Persian, with equal frankness, "we acknowledge two motives for our actions. We may be forced to do a thing, or we may be bribed to do it. Force you dare not use, for your parliament will not allow it. This we know, therefore we are not afraid of you. We have nothing to hope from you; for, although you are very rich, nothing will ever induce you to part with any of your money. We Persians are naturally insolent towards those from whom we have nothing to hope and nothing to fear. The eternal cackle of your blue-books and newspapers has long ago taught us that we are a political necessity to you, as long as you maintain your empire in the East. We know perfectly well that whatever we do you will not harm us, and we do not choose to serve your purposes for

nothing. One hundredth part of the sum you wasted in making such a silly rumpus down at Bushire a few years ago, if well distributed among the right people, would have made us your humble servants for the next hundred years. As it was, we derived a singular pleasure in provoking you, knowing perfectly well that we were quite safe in so doing. We enjoyed, also, much amusement from the Indian rebellion, and, had it continued, we should have sent active aid to the insurgents, to spite you. It would have been better to give us a few tomana's."

"Doubtless it would have been better," returned the Englishman, good humouredly, "if—honour apart—Persia were the only nation in the world whose friendship could be bought. But if we bought you, we must buy the chief of Herat, and every rapacious soldier whose sword wins power for him in Cabool and Candahar. We must purchase the Affghans, and the Oosbeks, and the Turcomans, and the free countries of India. We are, as you say, a rich people, but we are not rich enough for this. Besides, it is not our way. We prefer merely to keep an eye upon your proceedings when you reject our friendship; though we wish for peace, you have learned how we can go to war."

"Pooh!" said the Persian; "you kill a few men, you waste a great deal of powder in knocking about some mud walls on the coast; but we know very well that you will never furnish so inconvenient a precedent to Russia as to take one inch of our territory. We don't care about your blustering."

"We might not," rejoined the Englishman, "indeed, occupy any portion of your country permanently; but supposing we were to march upon your capital and change the dynasty? We might easily find among our pensioners and dependents, some manageable prince to place upon the most brilliant throne in Asia."

"And what should we care if you did find him?" replied the khan. "We have none of that loyalty towards a man, or a family, which is the boast of the royalists of Europe. We respect, because we fear, the power of the king, but we have no love for his person. Plenty of discontented and powerful khans would always hail a new reign with delight. It would be an amusement and an excitement for us at any time, to have a new king. It would open a fresh field for the intrigues in which we delight."

"Very probably," said the Englishman; "but how would such a prospect appear to the king himself?"

"He would never believe in it," answered the Persian. "If he were persuaded that there was any real danger, he would make peace with you in time to avert it; after having enjoyed the pleasure of irritating you as long as it was safe to do so. But in truth there is no such danger. Russia would never allow you to place a creature of your own upon the throne of Persia, and we should at once appeal to her for protection, which we think we might always obtain, at

least for the price of a province; and with her aid we might afterwards seize upon Herat, or some other convenient district, to indemnify ourselves. Then, we know that France has always been jealous of your empire in the East, and might at any time be induced to step in as a mediator. This would gall you to the quick. You would not like to see the imperial eagles planted on the shore of the Persian Gulf."

"It is my opinion," returned the Englishman, "that you would find your hopes entirely unfounded. Russia has quite enough upon her hands for the next half century, in settling her affairs at home. The Caucasus is not yet quiet, and I feel convinced that her policy is not one of conquest. What could you offer her, but a salt desert, and a beggared population? As for France, she has recently acted in cordial co-operation with England in her foreign wars. What inducement could you propose to her, to make her withdraw the hand of brotherhood she has so frankly stretched out to us? What use would an establishment in Persia be to her, even if she were hostile to England? We guard all the high-ways of the East. How could France support a petty colony in a Persian province? What would it be to her but a fruitless source of trouble and expense?"

"Words!" answered the Persian. "Your own parliament would not allow you to carry on a protracted war with us, whatever a minister might wish. Do you think we did not read the speeches of your opposition, the last time you quarrelled with us?"

"Parliament is, indeed," said the Englishman, "unwilling to sanction war, and politicians hostile to a ministry have always a great deal to say against whatever they do; but you must remember that the opposition never expresses the true sense of the country, or it would cease to be the opposition. Often the very man who blames the conduct of a statesman in power, knows that were he himself in office, he would have been obliged to take the very course which he condemns. It is the sense of the British people, who are the parliament makers, that you should consider in your calculations: not the factious words of individual and irresponsible members who have purposes of their own to serve. Depend upon it, however reluctant we may be to begin a fight with you, we shall have the best of it before we end."

"You speak," said the Persian, smiling with delightful affability, "as if we were a patriotic and united nation; whereas we are merely a number of individuals, with separate views and interests, living upon the same soil. There is always a revolt somewhere among us, and we rejoice at it, for there is so much the better chance of plundering the vanquished. What do I, for instance, Boosey Khan, care whether you had the best of it or not? The war would give me a chance of fortune either way, if I played my cards well. You would not hurt me. I should take care to keep personally out of the

scrape, and as I have no chance of being king, I do not care one straw who is. All my tomanauns and jewels might be buried, so that you could never find them, in half an hour. Your war would not disturb me at all. You would kill a few soldiers, and are very welcome to the pleasure of doing so, if it amuses you. But every man of sense would make his own terms with you, and be glad of an opportunity to get something out of the scramble. So you see, Sahib Smith, if you want my services in any way, you must buy them. I am merely a representative of my class, and only speak the sentiments of every influential man in Persia. If you give us nothing, you cannot reasonably expect anything from us; for we don't love you, and it would be childish to fear you." Then, with a kindling eye, he glanced round his palace. "Look at those mirrors! They came from France. Behold that magnificent and beautiful service of plate; it came from Russia. If we were to offend the French, they have no parliament to prevent their punishing us. If we were to offend the Russians, they are within a few days' march of Tabreez. But as to you, you dare not strike us, and you cannot, or will not, give us anything. We know that if there is a quarrel between you and us, we can always mend it if we choose, in time to save ourselves; and we can, and we shall, torment your ministers at our court, and insult your flag as often as we have an opportunity of doing so, till you change your ways with us."

"But Malcolm and Jones gave you money enough and presents enough, in all conscience. Yet you insulted Malcolm's secretary, and laughed at Jones's."

"The memory of benefits," said the Persian, sententiously, "does not last for ever. We tormented Pasley and his companion, a little in the provinces, in the hopes of getting more from him; but Malcolm had no cause to complain of his reception. We treated him as we have never treated any of your representatives since his time, and he might have done, and he did, whatever he pleased with us. His mission—though I am aware that you complain of it—was costly, and paid its expenses twenty times over, in tangible advantages to you. It is true we should have sold him to Napoleon, if Napoleon had bribed us higher, but no one could out-bribe you rich English if you pleased to contest the palm, and we shall always belong individually and collectively to any one who will pay the highest price for us. As for Sir Harford Jones, we worried him to please Malcolm, and because you had sent him to interfere with Sir John, whom we liked very much. Besides, Sir Harford Jones bought the wrong people. He wasted thousands on a fellow who called himself his "jockey," and who had no influence at all. Malcolm understood us much better, and never wasted a sixpence on anybody who could not serve him. Besides, at that time, we thought John Company, whom we supposed to be an old woman of fabulous power, a much more important personage than the King of

England, of whom we knew nothing; and therefore we considered Malcolm a greater man than Jones, and we were glad to help him in the family fight which you appear to have got up at that time for our entertainment. In a word, Sahib Smith, it is no use wasting any more talk; whenever you really want us, you must buy us, and there is an end of it."

This is, fairly and truly, the Persian view of the case between England and Persia.

POLAND.

ENGLISH readers, who con the telegrams from Poland in the morning papers with an interest which is somewhat dashed by the perpetual intrusion of names unpronounceable by Western lips, are apt to regard that distant land watered by the Vistula from a point of view partly compassionate, partly romantic and sentimental. They think of Thaddeus of Warsaw, as delineated by Miss Jane Porter; they recollect some of the operas and ballets of former days; they have visions of the polka, the varsoviana, and the cracovienne—of exiled counts, great in ladies' drawing-rooms, of wild-eyed, long-haired instrumentalists and vocalists (musical and melancholy), of much life-long misery heroically borne, and of some few impostors. They sigh, they moralise, and they pass on; but it never occurs to them that this "Niobe of nations" was at one time a great power, strong enough to be a terror to the nations which now oppress it, and to stand as a bulwark between the rest of Europe and the vast wave of Ottoman conquest.

The Poles have sometimes been described as the Irish of the Continent; and there is a good deal of truth in the characterisation. They have the same impulsive lyrical temperament; the same impressionable nature; the same love of military adventure; the same devotion to the Roman Catholic faith, resisting all the assaults of Protestantism; and, it is to be feared, the same incapacity for the prosaic work of practical self-government. Yet they must have possessed a greater inherent vitality than our Milesian fellow-subjects; for Poland remained a distinct kingdom till near the close of last century, while the separate nationality of Ireland has ceased to exist for seven hundred years. The maintenance of her independence by Poland is the more remarkable when we consider that, with powerful neighbours, she had but weak frontiers, excepting where the Carpathian mountains divided her from Hungary. The country is for the most part a vast plain—not the best sort of ground to defend against an enemy, though greatly assisted in this respect by the prevalence of large forests and marshes. The word "Pole" in the native tongue signifies a plain; but we are not to suppose that the whole land is an unbroken champaign. Still, flatness is the general characteristic; and the rivers are sluggish, and disposed to overflow their bounds. With these disadvantages—with a climate not very inviting, and a soil not very fertile—it may

appear surprising that Poland should ever have made a figure in the world. But it received the rudiments of civilisation at an earlier period than some of its neighbours, and the military virtues of its people maintained its independence until a comparatively recent epoch.

In the ancient world, Poland was unknown as a separate nation. It formed part of that vast tract stretching from Europe far into the Northern Asiatic plains, and known as Sarmatia, the races inhabiting which were reckoned barbarians by the Greeks and Romans (no doubt very justly), and were held in bad moral repute by their more cultivated neighbours; though what right the latter had to upbraid them on that ground it would be hard to say. The then desolate region, however, had its revenge on the Romans in the days of their decline; for from the various districts of Sarmatia issued forth several of those fierce and warlike tribes which repeatedly sacked the city of the Cæsars, and, rough, savage, and unlettered as they were themselves, formed the connecting link between ancient and modern civilisation. Poland seems to have arisen as a distinct state about the middle of the sixth century; but it was then only a dukedom, and was peopled with wild pagans, who have left few records of themselves in history. The Poles were not converted to Christianity until a rather late period, though earlier than some of the surrounding populations. In the savage recesses of their forests and bogs, they maintained the idolatrous worship of older times until the year 965—only a century before the Norman conquest of England. The founder of the first dynasty was a peasant named Piast, of whom we have no exact account. The dukedom became a kingdom in the year 1000, by favour of the German Emperor, Otho the Third, who recognised its independence of the Empire; and from that time Poland became a power in Europe, and a country to be feared as well as respected.

The most prominent characters in the early history of the land are the five monarchs bearing the name of Boleslaus, or Boleslav. It was in the reign of the first of these (extending over the first quarter of the eleventh century) that the dukedom was raised to the higher rank of a kingdom; and the ruler thus dignified sought every opportunity of asserting his power in the most tangible way. He reduced the whole of Bohemia and Moravia, and, seizing the reigning duke, put out his eyes, following up that atrocity by condemning his son to perpetual imprisonment. Then he carried his victorious arms into Russia, where he restored a certain prince who had been compelled to fly the country. This prince had the ingratitude afterwards to conspire against Boleslaus, who was pursued by the very brother with whom the restored ruler had been engaged in civil war; but the Pole worsted him, after a sanguinary encounter, and, leaving the Muscovite territory, of which he certainly had no reason to think kindly, poured his legions into Pomerania, Prussia, and Saxony, which he subjugated even

to the banks of the Elbe. A long term of peace ensued, during which the king employed his leisure in framing a code of laws, and promoting the prosperity of his extensive dominions. War, however, at length burst out afresh in Russia. Boleslaus, quitting the ease of his court, hastened to the scene of action; achieved a brilliant victory on the banks of the Boristhenes, or Dnieper; imposed a tribute on the conquered people, and reduced them to un murmuring submission. This potent monarch—who might be called the Slavonic Charlemagne or Charles the Twelfth—is the king to whom Tennyson alludes in a noblesonnet written "On hearing of the outbreak of the Polish insurrection" (1830):

O for those days of Piast, ere the Czar
Grew to this strength among his deserts cold;
When even to Moscow's cupolas were roll'd
The growing murmurs of the Polish war!
Now must your noble anger blaze out more
Than when from Sobieski, clan by clan,
The Moslem myriads fell, and fled before;
Than when Zamoyski smote the Tartar Khan;
Than, earlier, when on the Baltic shore
Boleslaus drove the Pomeranian.

The history of the second Boleslaus, surnamed the Bold, is distinguished by many romantic incidents, and has much of an Oriental colour in the violence of its transitions from good to evil fortune. This monarch seems to have constituted himself the general protector and reinstator of deposed sovereigns. With this object, he successfully conducted expeditions into Bohemia, Hungary, and Russia, and in the last-mentioned country subdued by famine the city of Kiev. Kiev was at that time the richest, the most splendid, and the most luxurious town in Muscovy. To this day, it is a place of great interest and beauty, picturesquely situated, and abounding in records of the past. Seated on two rocky eminences, separated by a deep ravine, it presents a wild vision of old churches, richly adorned; of massive earthen walls enclosing the more sacred precincts of the city; of cathedral pinnacles and palace towers, rising from the clustering boughs of aged trees; of sculptured gates, towering belfries and obelisks, and gilt cupolas connected by golden chains. The catacombs of the ancient monastery of St. Anthony, founded two centuries before the time of Boleslaus the Second, are even now visited by fifty thousand pilgrims every year from all parts of Russia, who troop there to adore the hundred bodies of Russian saints, which the dryness of the air keeps in admirable preservation. Kiev is the Holy City of the Muscovites—their object of superstitious regard and aspiration, as Mecca is to the Moslem. In the middle of the eleventh century, when subjected by the Polish conqueror, it was a sacred city too; but it was also a centre of enervating enjoyments, though it is said by modern travellers to be now detestable as a residence. Boleslaus treated the vanquished citizens with great generosity, and took up his abode among them for many years,

almost forgetting his native country in the attractions of his new capital. But the voluptuous delights to which he resigned himself had the worst influence on his character. He became sensual, haughty, and despotic, and was only roused from his blissful trance by the outbreak of a rebellion in Poland. The wives of his military followers, offended by the long absence of their husbands, took to their serfs. Intelligence of this arriving at Kiev, the warriors, without asking permission of their leader, hurried back with the determination of taking revenge; but they found this no such easy task as they had supposed. Stimulated by the exhortations of their mistresses, and by the necessity of defending their lives to the utmost, the serfs armed themselves, seized on the fortresses, and resisted with great valour and obstinacy; the women fighting by their sides, and singling out their husbands wherever they could distinguish them from the mass. The struggle was prolonged for a considerable time; in the midst of it Boleslaus arrived from Kiev, with a vast army made up of Russians and Poles; swept down upon both of the contending parties, and quenched the feud in blood. An evil time for the king ensued upon the restoration of peace. He got into a quarrel with the Bishop of Cracow, somewhat like that which our Henry the Second had with Thomas à Becket; and it led to a similar termination, for the bishop was murdered while officiating in his cathedral. In consequence of this crime, Boleslaus was excommunicated by the Pope, and deprived of his sovereignty; his kingdom was laid under an interdict; he was abandoned by his subjects, and forced to fly into Hungary. Some of the monkish writers say that he died a violent death about the year 1080; but it is more generally supposed that he took refuge in a monastery in Carinthia, and expired there in the humble capacity of cook, after having tasted all the power and glory of empire, and all the pleasures of alluring Kiev.

The third and fourth Polish monarchs, bearing the name of Boleslaus, conducted successful expeditions against the German Empire and Prussia, though some of their undertakings were not so fortunate. The third sustained a defeat at the hands of the Russians; and the fourth, after subduing Prussia, and converting its inhabitants, at the point of the sword, into very doubtful Christians, fell into an ambuscade which the treacherous converts had laid for him, and barely escaped with his life. This Boleslaus reigned about the middle of the twelfth century; and early in the following century there was a fifth of the same name—a weak and superstitious monarch, who suffered his kingdom to be ravaged by the Tartars.

Vladislav and Sigismund are two other names frequently borne by Polish kings, and associated with many warlike achievements and memorable events. We find, also, the name of Zamoyski rendered illustrious at different periods by three eminent nobles. The most remarkable of the triad was the first, who died in 1605, after

having, for nearly thirty years, maintained himself at the head of affairs as Grand Chancellor of Poland, despite the intrigues of faction; though a civilian by education, he took the command of the army when almost a middle-aged man, and achieved great successes against the Russians, Swedes, and Tartars. It was he who, in the diet held a little before his death, told the king, Sigismund the Third, that, having misgoverned the country, with a view to his own interests, he might be deposed; and added, seeing the monarch lay his hand on his sword, "Withdraw your hand from your sword, prince. Do not oblige history to record that we were Brutuses, and you a Cæsar."

For several centuries, the acquisitions of territory to the Polish crown were considerable, and exhibit a striking contrast to the present debased and mangled condition of the country. Galicia (now Austrian Poland) was wrested from Russia in the fourteenth century, during the reign of Casimir the Great, who conferred still greater services on his people, by curbing the tyranny of the nobles over the peasants. Lithuania was united with Poland towards the close of the same century, in consequence of the reigning queen, Hedvige, marrying the grand-son of the smaller state—a pagan prince, who thereupon became christianised. In the middle of the fifteenth century, Poland was augmented by some of the eastern provinces of Prussia. In 1510, the reigning prince of Moldavia and Wallachia was compelled to acknowledge himself a vassal of the powerful sovereigns who ruled at Cracow; and less than fifty years later, Livonia voluntarily placed itself under Polish rule, to avert the danger of subjection by Russia, to which empire the province now belongs, after having for a brief period been incorporated with Sweden. The history of the greater part of the seventeenth century is a record of perpetual contests with Russia, during which the Poles twice penetrated to Moscow, and which, early in the century, led to a cession of Muscovite territory to Poland. One disastrous incident of the period however, must not be forgotten—the temporary conquest of Poland by Charles Gustavus of Sweden. It was not long before the Swedes were expelled; but the reputation of the country suffered, until restored shortly afterwards by the famous John Sobieski.

That truly noble man was the sunset of Polish glory. He was born in Galicia in 1629, and was partially educated in France, where he served as one of the Musketeers of Louis the Fourteenth. An alarming insurrection of Cossacks, joined by Polish serfs, called him in haste from Constantinople, and, joining the national army, he fought with great distinction. Poland was at that time assailed by the Cossacks, the Tartars, the Swedes, and the Russians. The king, John Casimir, was weak and incompetent, and Sobieski soon became the hope of the nation. He rose to the head of the army; defeated the Cossacks and Tartars; and drove out the Turks, who, led by the Sultan, Mahomet the Fourth, in person, had invaded the

country. The throne becoming vacant, Sobieski was elected by acclamation as its next occupant. A fresh Turkish invasion speedily called him into the field. He routed one army, and was soon afterwards compelled to encounter another, led by the Pasha of Damascus, who was called by his followers "the Devil," being deemed by them invincible. The Polish warrior, at the head of only ten thousand men—a mere handful in comparison with the legions of the enemy—entrenched himself between two villages on the banks of the Dniester, and for twenty days withstood a furious cannonade by the Moslems. On the 14th of October, 1676, he suddenly sallied forth, and, drawing up in order of battle, struck a panic terror into the Turks, who conceived that Sobieski could be nothing short of a wizard to defy such odds, and whose commander accordingly offered him honourable terms of peace, which were accepted. During the few years of tranquillity which followed this exploit, Sobieski endeavoured to introduce reforms into the Polish constitution; but he was always defeated by the selfish prejudices of the nobles. It was not long, however, before the European encroachments of the Turks again summoned the king to the active pursuits of war, and gave him the opportunity for the greatest of his military achievements. This time it was not Poland, but the Austrian capital, that was threatened by the Moslem. Vienna was closely beleaguered by the Grand Vizier, Kara Mustapha; and all Europe awaited the issue of the siege with breathless anxiety. Hungary had been already overrun, though the country of the Magyars was generally regarded as the eastern bulwark of Christianity against the tide of Mussulman power. Had Vienna fallen, it is impossible to say where that tide would have stopped; and the crisis was looked upon with the utmost gravity and alarm. At the head of sixteen thousand Poles, Sobieski advanced to the relief of Vienna; being joined by several German contingents, he found himself on the 11th of September, 1683, in command of an army of seventy thousand men. From the mountain ridge of Kalemberg, which dominates Vienna, he saw the plain below covered with the Ottoman hosts. On the following day, the Turks were driven into their entrenchments; but here Sobieski paused, conceiving the position to be too strong for attack. A trifling incident, however, had the effect of suddenly provoking him into a change of purpose which had the happiest results. In the early evening, he caught sight of the Grand Vizier seated at the entrance to his tent, sipping coffee. The cool indifference of this proceeding irritated the Polish king to such a degree that he gave orders for an immediate assault; the Christians dashed like a thunderbolt into the Moslem ranks; and the Turks, after a brief resistance, fled, leaving their enemies in possession of the ground, the whole camp, the artillery, and the baggage.

The latter end of the seventeenth and commencement of the eighteenth centuries, mark a period of history memorable for the produc-

tion of military genius; but, even when placed side by side with the illustrious names of Turenne, Charles the Twelfth of Sweden, Peter the Great of Russia, Marlborough, Prince Eugene, and Villars, the fame of Sobieski stands out brilliantly. It would have been well for his country if he had been equally successful in domestic legislation. But he was perpetually thwarted in his projects of reform; and he saw the consequences of his failure with the prevision of a prophet. At the close of the diet of 1688, he thus addressed the assembly: "What will be one day the surprise of posterity to see that, after being elevated to such a height of glory, we have suffered our country to fall into the gulf of ruin; to fall, alas! for ever. For myself, I may from time to time have gained her battles; but I am powerless to save her. I can do no more than leave the future of my beloved land, not to destiny—for I am a Christian—but to God, the High and Mighty."

Eight years after the delivery of these memorable words, Sobieski died; and the first steps of that ruin which he predicted were not long in making themselves visible. The crown became subservient to the Russian court.

The first partition of Poland took place in 1772, at the instigation of Frederick the Great of Prussia. A territory of upwards of eighty-three thousand square miles was thus lost to Poland, and gained by Russia, Prussia, and Austria. The nobles at last set to work to introduce some of those improvements which had been advocated, a century before, by Sobieski; but even then the most important were refused. A new code was proposed to the diet, with a view to partially emancipating the peasants. With scarcely credible fatuity, the diet rejected it. A new constitution, however, was proclaimed on the 2nd of May, 1792; and by this act the throne was made hereditary after the death of Stanislaus Augustus Poniatowski, the reigning king. Russia and Prussia opposed the new constitution, with the treacherous connivance of Poniatowski; and in 1793 there was a second partition of Polish soil between the two invading powers. The Russians occupied Warsaw; but in the following year occurred the celebrated insurrection of which Kosciusko was the leader. It succeeded for a little while, but was eventually crushed out in 1795, when the remainder of the distracted country was divided between the three powers who had shared the first spoliation. The invasion of Prussia and Russia by Napoleon in 1806, reanimated the hopes of the Poles; but the peace of Tilsit disappointed their more sanguine expectations. The greater part of the Prussian-Polish territory, however, received a quasi-independence, under the title of the Duchy of Warsaw. This state of things lasted until the general peace of 1815, when Russia, Prussia, and Austria, resumed possession of the whole of the ancient kingdom, with the exception of the city and small territory of Cracow, which were erected into a republic. It must be within the memory of most of our readers that this last fragment of independent Poland was seized

by Austria in 1846, on the ground that it had long been a centre of intrigues for the restoration of the fallen nationality. Cracow was the ancient capital of Poland; in its fine old Gothic cathedral may be seen memorials of her great men, from the heroes of the mediæval ages, down to Kosciusko.

High Tory though he was, Lord Castlereagh, who represented England at the Congress of Vienna in 1815, did the most he could to procure for the Poles, not only humane treatment, but something like freedom. The Emperor Alexander of Russia showed himself especially desirous of according those favours, though not to the full extent demanded by Castlereagh; and, the Duchy of Warsaw having been erected into a Kingdom of Poland attached to the Russian crown, a constitution was granted, which guaranteed to the people a separate executive, a parliament, a national army, and the use of the national language. Had the engagement been faithfully observed, that part of Poland which fell to the Czar would probably have remained content. But it is in the nature of such compacts to suffer shipwreck on the first trial. The subjects take more advantage of their guaranteed liberties than the foreign conqueror is pleased to see; repression follows; isolated outbreaks among the governed, express the old longings for nationality and complete freedom; and a pretext is soon found by the despot for falsifying his promises. It was so in Russian Poland; and at length, in November, 1830, an insurrection burst forth, more formidable than any that had been seen since the days of Kosciusko. To the indignation of Europe, Prussia gave the same aid to Russia that she is now rendering; and, after a brief career of success, the patriots were defeated in several engagements, and the autumn of 1831 saw the entire ruin of their plans. From that time to this, Russia has spared no cruelty or oppression to destroy the nationality of the Poles, and to make them a mere undistinguished element in the Muscovite population. A little before the close of the insurrection of 1831, the government of Louis Philippe sought the co-operation of England in demanding of the Czar Nicholas the execution of the stipulations of Vienna. Our present Prime Minister then held the seals of the Foreign Office; and he declined to interfere, on the ground that England was not prepared to support the demand by "more direct and effectual interference" with her "good and faithful ally" of Russia. Tennyson, writing at the time, said that our neglecting to "aid the right" was

A matter to be wept with tears of blood.

And it *was* so wept, a quarter of a century later, in the Crimea; for there can be little doubt that the impunity with which the Emperor Nicholas violated the engagements he had inherited, encouraged him to make that subsequent attempt on the life of "the sick man" which, though it terminated in his own humiliation, cost the Western Powers dear.

It will have been seen, from the foregoing historical sketch, that Poland has at all times been fruitful in the production of great men—especially of men possessing signal military genius. There has never been any want of intellect, or of manhood in its most vigorous form, in the Polish people. Yet the nation has lain for three-quarters of a century under the feet of empires which in earlier ages felt the might of its sword, and one of which, less than two hundred years ago, was saved from destruction by its valour and ability. The causes of this change were indicated beforehand by Sobieski. The constitution of Poland was radically false. It was contrived for the benefit of a single class, and that class used its privileges with cruel selfishness. On the death of Casimir the Great, in 1370, the ancient dynasty of Piast, which had held the sceptre from the pre-Christian ages, became extinct; that of Jagellon succeeded; and subsequently the monarchy was made elective. The state was thenceforth called a Republic; and a Republic it really was, only of the very worst kind. It was an aristocratical Commonwealth, headed by a king who was chosen by the nobles exclusively, and who was little better than their puppet. The mutual jealousies of the great lords, which the monarch was powerless to check, often paralysed the whole forces of the country when they were most needed. This, says an old account of Poland, published in 1701, "was the reason why the King of Sweden, with an army of forty thousand, reduced to the last extremity a country whose least armies generally exceeded two hundred thousand fighting men. For their misunderstanding [that of the nobles] is such, and the authority of their prince so little, that, before the diet is assembled, and the gentry come to a resolution, the enemy have time to do what they please, there being no place of strength to put a stop to them until they come to Warsaw." The privileges and immunities of the nobles were of the most extravagant kind. They had the power of life, and death over their vassals, who were no better than slaves. The laws were so ordered as to lead to a constant accumulation of property in the hands of the great landowners. The house of a nobleman was a secure asylum for persons who had committed any crime; for no one had the right to take them thence without the consent of the master. The judges dared not cause a nobleman's serf to be arrested, or his effects to be seized. Noblemen and their vassals paid no toll or duty on the cattle, corn, &c., which they exported. All civil posts and ecclesiastical dignities were usurped by the territorial lords, to the exclusion of every other class; none but noblemen were qualified to possess estates, with the exception of the burghers of Cracow and four other cities; and such was the disrepute of commerce, that the fact of

engaging in trade caused a nobleman to forfeit the privileges of his birth. The condition of the lower orders was, of course, proportionately wretched. Our old friend Peter Heylyn, writing in 1629, says that the gentlemen were "free," but that the peasants lived "in miserable subjection to their lords." And the account from which we have already quoted, and which describes the state of things existing more than seventy years later than the days of Heylyn, speaks of the agricultural population as "the poorest wretches in the world, having not the least thing which they call their own, and being subject to their lords, that treat them worse than galley-slaves. If a neighbour kills a boor, it is but paying the price he is rated at, and the business is made up. And whereas in other countries a nobleman is said to be worth so much a year, here he is said to be master of so many slaves, who work hard, live on little, and dwell in pitiful cabins, daubed with mud, and covered with straw. Their children play, sleep, and eat with the pigs, whilst the father makes use of the hog-trough and cow-rack for table and bed."

Such was the lot of the Polish peasantry up to the time of the partition; it goes far to explain the fall of a country once great and powerful. The nobility wrangled over their dishonest privileges while the enemy was at the gates; and, when the struggle came, the masses had no heart to strike manfully for the preservation of an independence from foreign rule, which meant only "miserable subjection" to native oppressors. Of all forms of despotism, the aristocratical is the most debasing and cruel—the most devoid of reason and of conscience. It was that which opened the door of Poland to Russia, Prussia, and Austria; and, if the vanquished nationality could be restored to-morrow, it would be ruined a second time, unless the Polish nobility (as we have reason to hope) have at length learnt wisdom from the humiliation and sorrow which their tyrants have forced them to endure.

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